











# Indian Speeches and Addresses

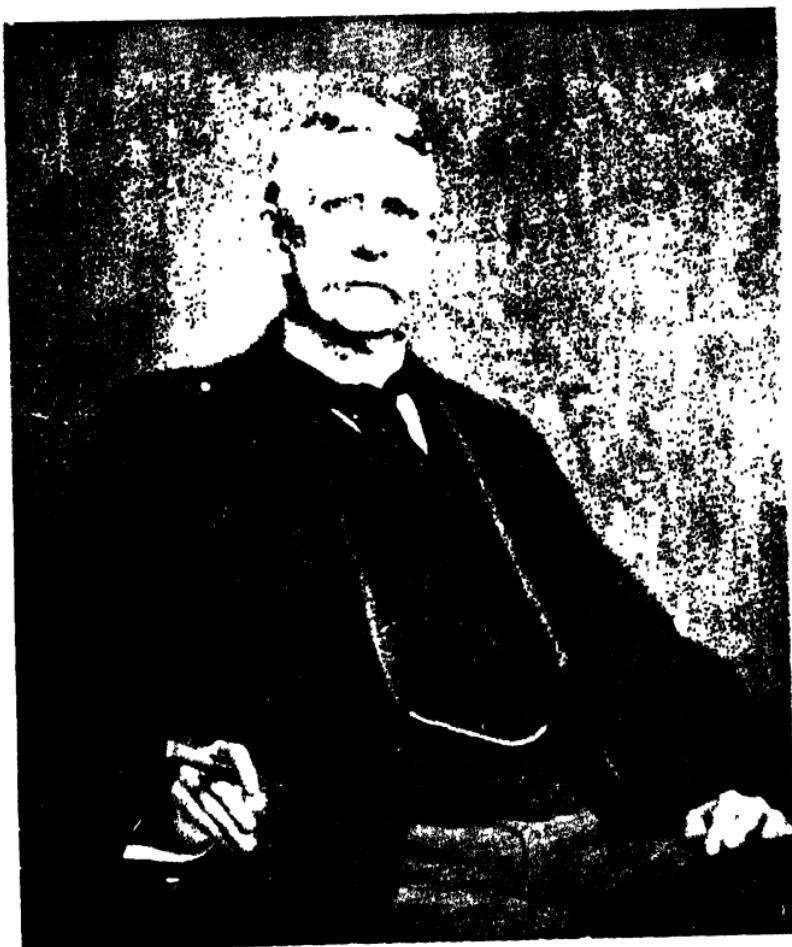
SIR HENRY COTTON  
K.C.S.I.



CALCUTTA  
S. K. LAHIRI & Co.,  
1903.







**SIR HENRY COTTON, K.C.S.I.**  
(*From a painting by H. G. Riviere, 1903.*)

# SIR HENRY COTTON, K. C. S. I.

## A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

SIR Henry John Stedman Cotton, K. C. S. I., was born on the 13th September, 1845, at Combaconum, in the Madras Presidency. For generations past, his family has been associated with India. It was in the middle of the eighteenth century that his great grandfather, Captain Joseph Cotton, of Leyton, the son of Cowper's poet-physician, Dr. Nathaniel Cotton, came to India in the commercial service of the Hon'ble Company; and on his retirement, held for 28 years the position of a Director of its Court, and of Deputy Master of the Trinity House, where a bust by Chantrey perpetuates his memory to this day. Two of his sons attained to eminence: William Cotton, D. C. L., F. R. S., Governor and "Father" of the Bank of England, and inventor of an automatic machine for the weightment of sovereigns, still in use under the name of the "Governor," whose son, the late Right Hon. Sir Henry Cotton, was from 1877 to 1890 one of the Lord Justices of the Court of Appeal in England; and John Cotton, who arrived in India in the year 1800 as a writer on the Madras Establishment, and served for 15 years as Collector of Tanjore. On his retirement, Mr. John Cotton became a Director of the Company, and in 1843 succeeded Sir J. I. Lushington, G. C. B., as Chairman of the Hon'ble Court. It was during his Chairmanship that Lord Ellenborough received notice of recall from India. The step was taken by the Directors in spite of the strong opposition of the Board of Control;

and Mr. Cotton's action, like that of his distinguished grandson in connection with the Assam Labour question, was severely animadverted upon by the Anglo-Indian Press of the time. The verdict of history has long since, however, been cast in his favour, and the invective of his opponents consigned to oblivion.

In 1831, Mr. John Cotton's son, Joseph John, entered the Madras Civil Service, from which he retired in 1863, a representative Haileybury Civilian of the old school. Mr. J. J. Cotton's second son, the subject of this memoir, passed at the open competition in the spring of 1865, Sir Henry's second son, Mr. Julian James Cotton, in his turn was appointed to the Madras Civil Service in 1893, and a nephew, Mr. W. B. Cotton, has been a member of the covenanted service in the United Provinces since 1894. It will thus be seen that Sir Henry represents a practically continuous service of five generations in this country—a record probably unique. For more than a century and a half the interests of his family have been wrapped up in India; and Sir Henry has written of himself in the pages of *New India*—“It is my pride that I am, as it were, an hereditary member of the administration.”

He received his early education at Magdalen College School, Oxford, under Dr. J. E. Millard; and was for a short time also at Brighton College. In 1861, Sir Henry's father sent him for a year to the Applied Sciences Department at King's College, London, to undergo the necessary training for a civil engineer, but he showed no aptitude for this branch of study, and was eventually allowed to enter the general department. Here he rapidly distinguished himself in Divinity, winning not only the scholarship in 1863 but also the lifelong friendship of Professor E. H. Plumptre, afterwards Dean of

Wells. In Classics, Orlando Haydon Hyman, a remarkable son of a remarkable father, Benjamin Haydon (the painter) was his tutor ; but his special strength lay always in English History, Language and Literature.

In his London days, Sir Henry Cotton organised a literary society, which was destined to exercise an important influence on his after life. Among its members were Edouard Naville, the Egyptologist ; Arthur O'Shaughnessy, the poet ; J. T. Nettleship, the animal-painter ; Edward Byrne, now a Judge of the Chancery Division of the High Court of Judicature in England : Professors Corfield and W. K. Clifford ; E. Nettleship, the eminent oculist ; Charles Lyall, now K. C. S. I. and C.I.E., and Judicial and Public Secretary at the India Office ; and the late Professor Evan Buchanan Baxter, who was later to achieve distinction as a leading London physician and successful teacher of medicine. It was in the year 1864 that Sir Henry Cotton's attention was drawn to John Stuart Mill's two Essays upon Auguste Comte, then appearing in the *Westminster Review*. He was led on to a perusal of Comte's own writings and became, with Dr. Baxter, a regular attendant at Dr. Congreve's lectures in Bouverie Street, Strand. The audience at that School of Humanity, though small, was already a distinguished one ; and included such well-known names as Miss Evans ("George Eliot"), Frederic Harrison, Professor Beesly, Dr. Bridges, Judge Vernon Lushington, and Henry Crompton. The Positivist principles, now acquired by Sir Henry Cotton, have always remained with him, and the spirit of their teaching has pervaded the whole of his Indian career. If there has ever been an official in India of whom it can faithfully be said that he has always "lived for others," and "lived openly," it is he.

He arrived in Bengal on the 29th October, 1867, and was posted to the Midnapore District, where he served his early training under Sir William Herschel, Bart., author of the well-known system of identification by thumb marks, and Mr. Herbert Reynolds, C. S. I. In July, 1869, he was appointed Sub-divisional Officer of Chooadangah, in the district of Nuddea, under Mr. James Monro, C. B., subsequently Chief Commissioner of the London Police. In March 1872, he was made Small Cause Court Judge of Sealdah, and in the following January, was brought into the Bengal Secretariat where he organised the new-formed Statistical Branch of the office—a service which elicited the special thanks of Sir George Campbell. He temporarily left the Secretariat for one year to officiate as Registrar of the High Court under Sir Richard Couch the then Chief Justice. During his connection with the Bengal Office, he wrote several administration reports, which were favourably noticed by Government, and one report on the external trade of Bengal won commendation from the late Marquess of Salisbury, at that time Secretary of State for India. Through all these years, Sir Henry Cotton enjoyed the entire confidence of his chiefs, and was a special favourite of both Sir Richard Temple and Sir George Campbell. The former refers to him in his "Men and Events of My Time in India" as one of the most promising officers in the country, and Sir George Campbell singles out his name for honourable comment in his autobiographical memoir.

While on leave in England in 1877, Sir Henry Cotton contributed two important papers on Indian questions to the *Fortnightly Review*, which was then in the heyday of its fame under Mr. John Morley's editorship.

On his return from furlough in 1878, he was

appointed Magistrate and Collector of Chittagong, the heaviest fiscal district of Bengal, and on two occasions officiated as Commissioner of the Chittagong Division. There he not only performed his official duties with success but found leisure to compile an admirable "Memorandum on the Revenue History of Chittagong," which has been justly described as a model of official writing. Not only is it replete with curious information regarding the early administration of Bengal, but it displays an equal mastery of the technical details of government and of the literary skill which turns a dry subject into a document full of human actuality. The account, for instance, of Joynarain Ghosal's forged *sunnud* can be read with more interest than many a novel. In the appendices to this work are to be found an interesting series of articles based on the Collectorate Records dating from 1761, the year of the appointment of Mr. Harry Verelst to be first "Chief" of the district. From Chittagong he also wrote an article which was published in the *New Quarterly Review* of October, 1879, entitled "India's Need and England's Duty."

In 1880 he was appointed Secretary to the Board of Revenue and held that office for many years. The late Mr. C. T. Buckland, formerly a Member of the Board, thus refers in his pamphlet on the Bengal Tenancy Act to a memorandum which Sir Henry drew up at the request of the Select Committee on the Bill:—"In order to satisfy this want the Government of Bengal directed Mr. H. J. S. Cotton to prepare a memorandum on the subject for the use of the Committee. It would hardly have been possible to find a more competent officer than Mr. Cotton for the purpose, as he combines in himself a very considerable local and practical experience of the

active working of the landed system, even in the most difficult and least understood District of Chittagong, with the more extensive knowledge and opportunities for considering and comparing general results, which his position as Secretary in the Land Revenue Department of the Board of Revenue affords to him. It would be difficult to overestimate the value of the report which Mr. Cotton prepared."

In 1883, Sir Henry Cotton went home to England on leave. It was the memorable year of the Ilbert Bill, when race-feeling ran so high. In London he delivered an address to a Positivist audience, in which he vindicated the policy of Lord Ripon's Government, and foreshadowed the principles subsequently enunciated in *New India*.

In 1884, he was nominated by the Municipal Commissioners of Calcutta to represent them in an official enquiry into the sanitary condition of the metropolis, and his services were acknowledged by the rate-payers in a proposal to place his bust in the Town Hall. The offer was, however, respectfully declined.

The year 1885 is an important landmark in Sir Henry's career. It was in November of that year that he published "New India or India in Transition," which has since passed through several editions, and has been translated into the principal vernacular languages. The object of this well-known book was to draw attention to the great political, social and religious changes gradually taking place in India. It urges the encouragement of the aspirations and spontaneous tendencies of the Indian people, and endeavours by proposals of a constructive character to show how, in Mr. Gladstone's words, the "internal liberties" of the country "ought to be carefully and systematically enlarged." This work

made a great stir at the time of its publication and was most highly spoken of by such diverse authorities as *The Times* newspaper and Mr. John Bright. *The Times* wrote :—“Mr. Cotton, who has rendered efficient aid and gained much experience in the Bengal Civil Service, has mingled much with the native community, who have given him their confidence in an unusual degree. His volume is the work of a thoughtful man, and even when its arguments do not command entire assent, they afford food for reflection.” The *Pall Mall Gazette* also used the following language :—“It is not often that an English official in India makes for himself sufficient leisure and possesses sufficient independence of judgment to criticize the silent transformation which is being wrought in the Indian continent by Western civilisation. Every one who desires to catch a glimpse of this momentous revolution, will find plenty of matter for reflection in Mr. Cotton’s unassuming volume. Nothing can impair the genuine value of his observations and of his bold sketch of the future that attends the Indian races.” But the most conspicuous tribute to the book and its author was rendered by Mr. John Bright in a speech delivered in the Birmingham Town Hall on the 8th December, 1885. “I have been reading,” he said, “within the last few days a very remarkable book called ‘New India or India in Transition.’ The author of it is a Mr. Cotton of the Bengal Civil Service, and it is published by Kegan Paul Trench and Co., in London. I give these particulars, because I wish to state that nothing could be happier for this country and India in regard to Indian questions than that the book should be carefully read by every man who, during the last fortnight, has been elected to sit in the House of Commons.”

The chapters on the religious and political tendencies of India, written as they are from a controversial standpoint, evoked considerable outcry, and Sir Henry Cotton was roughly handled in the Anglo-Indian Press. It was, perhaps, only natural also that his independence of attitude should have gained disfavour in official circles, and that for a time he should have become a marked man. But his abilities were too great to shut him out from a portion at least of the promotion which was his due, and not even his bitterest opponent has ever been found to say that his individual opinions or personal predilections have in any way impaired his sense of official responsibility.

In 1887, he was appointed to officiate as Commissioner of Police and Chairman of the Corporation of Calcutta during the late Sir Henry Harrison's absence on leave. His services in this capacity will be remembered in connection with the new central thoroughfare now known as the Harrison Road, which was sanctioned mainly through his advocacy. At the close of the year, he was placed on special duty as President of the Commission to enquire into the working of the Sone Canals, and the report submitted by him, though it ran counter to departmental prejudices, and was therefore not well received in the Irrigation Department, has resulted in many important administrative improvements.

In 1888, Sir Henry Cotton was selected by Sir Steuart Bayley to act as Revenue Secretary to the Government of Bengal, and on the death, two years later, of Mr Colman Macaulay, C. I. E., he was confirmed in the appointment of Financial Secretary. In 1891, he received the further honour of appointment to the Bengal Legislative Council. From the 26th November to the

4th December, 1891, Sir Henry was placed on special duty as President of the Calcutta Police Commission, and from the 5th of the latter month he officiated as Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, being confirmed in that office on the retirement of Sir John Edgar in July 1892. On the 25th May 1892, his services to the State were recognised by his appointment as a Companion of the Star of India. In April, 1896, he availed himself of two months and 12 days' privilege leave, and on his return was selected by Lord Elgin to act as Home Secretary to the Government of India. In November, 1896, he was appointed Chief Commissioner of Assam, in succession to Sir William Ward, and held that office until his retirement from the Indian Civil Service in October, 1902. He was gazetted as an additional member of the Viceroy's Legislative Council in November 1900, and took a prominent part in the debates on the Assam Labour Bill during that cold weather session, resigning his seat in March, 1901, when the measure was passed into law. The climax of his distinguished official career was reached on the 26th June, 1902, when he was promoted to the dignity of a Knight Commandership of the Order of the Star of India, and received the honour of knighthood at the hands of King Edward himself at Buckingham Palace.

On the events which have signalized Sir Henry Cotton's administration of Assam there is no need to enlarge in this place. They have been gratefully recorded by the people of the Province in the farewell address presented by them at Gauhati in May 1902, on the occasion of his handing over charge of the administration before his departure on privilege leave: and Lord Curzon has taken advantage of each of his visits to Assam, to acknowledge both at Gauhati and Silchar in

eloquent terms, his personal appreciation of the services rendered by the Chief Commissioner during a period of unusual difficulty and distress. It was certainly not Sir Henry's fault that the great earthquake of 1897 crippled his resources, or that the many schemes launched by him for the improvement of the province were not suffered to work smoothly. Had he had his way, Assam would be to-day studded with a network of feeder tramways, and an important step forward would have taken in the matter of colonizing the millions of acres of culturable land which remain untilled for want of capital and labour. But he had not the happiness to be one of those favourites of fortune who spend nine-tenths of their official lives at Simla, and hence Simla afforded him no assistance and no encouragement. In other directions, however, his beneficent energy was permitted to exert itself. The Cotton College at Gauhati and the Berry-White Medical school at Dibrugarh attest his zeal in the cause of education : and the startling decrease of the mortality among the prison-population from 59 to 22 per mille in the course of six years speaks convincingly of his humane efforts to improve the jail administration of the province. Sir Henry's popularity with the people of the country has always been remarkable, and the planters in Assam, appreciating the keen interest evinced in their welfare, were also amongst his staunchest admirers until, in the discharge of his duty, he felt it incumbent upon him to point out that the abnormal system under which their labour was recruited harboured many abuses which reflected credit neither on the employer nor on the Government which was charged with the task of supervision. The merits of the controversy may be left undiscussed : yet it must not be forgotten that Sir Henry, in his farewell speech at Shillong, pointedly observed that

the investigation, which was to bring him into collision with the tea-industry, was not of his own seeking, but was imposed upon him from without. The full and complete history of the new Assam Labour Act has evidently still to be written, but Sir Henry, who, as he told his Assamese friends at Gauhati, is "true to his salt," will be too loyal to write it, and Lord Curzon too well appreciates the nature of the treatment accorded by him to his lieutenant to suggest it. However this may be, the Chief Commissioner's reward for his honesty and independence was a torrent of vituperation of the most vulgar and personal description from the planters' organs in the Press, and scant recognition and support from Simla which did not scruple to sacrifice justice to expediency in its anxiety not to offend a powerful combination of capitalists. Sir Henry himself, as he assured his hearers at Gauhati, has been little affected by the ink-slinging of which he has been the target. Opportunism has always been abhorrent to him, and he holds to the opinion that no public officer should shrink from declaring what he honestly believes to be the plain truth, however unpalatable and unwelcome that truth may be at the time. He looks to posterity for the justification of his labour policy, and posterity will triumphantly vindicate him, as it has vindicated Sir Frederick Halliday and Sir John Peter Grant, who in their day also championed the cause of the weak against the strong.

Sir Henry Cotton has, as a matter of fact, always held views in advance of his contemporaries, and in this connection his evidence before the Public Service Commission in 1887 is of particular interest. Of the 442 witnesses examined by the Commissioners, almost all assumed the Covenanted Civil Service as the *sine qua non* of the Indian

polity, and the schemes propounded by them had all more or less reference to the remodelling and recruiting of the Service as necessitated by the altered conditions of the time. Sir Henry alone ventured to modify the central position and formulate a scheme of reconstructive policy. While not slow to accord deserved praise to the able band of administrators belonging to the Covenanted Service, who have contributed so much towards the consolidation of the Indian Empire, he held that so centralized a system of Government was already outworn in the more advanced Provinces, and that the time had come, especially in the judicial branch, for gradually replacing it by some more suitable machinery. He was among the foremost, if not the first, to advocate the extension of Local Self-Government and the enlargement of the Legislative Councils. To maintain English supremacy in India intact, and at the same time to shape into another mould the favoured monopoly of the Civil Service, to utilize all that is wisest and most effective in English guidance, and yet to develop native powers of government, to reduce the cost of administration, to promote sympathy between rulers and ruled, to bring justice to the doors of the poor, to kill the anomaly of a prosecutor-judge,—these are the problems which Sir Henry has busied himself to attempt to solve, and with which his name will always be associated, whether as pioneer or prophet.

As Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, he achieved an unqualified success. His genial and conciliating disposition, his knowledge of men and things, his quick and alert intelligence, his tact and faculty of judicious discrimination, made him an ideal adviser to a ruler of the type of Sir Charles Elliott. Many were

the occasions upon which that well-meaning but impetuous administrator was saved from an ignominious fall by the sagacious counsels of his wiser subordinate : and it is an open secret that the ill-starred Jury notification would never have seen the light, if Sir Charles Elliott had hearkened to the warning of his Chief Secretary. With officials of every rank, from the Commissioner of a Division to the Sub-deputy Magistrate of the lowest grade, Sir Henry Cotton's popularity was universal, and when he left Bengal for Assam, he was awarded the signal honour of a congratulatory dinner at the hands of his fellow-civilians. To the people of the country, his attitude was invariably one of sympathy and encouragement : and his influence was always exercised in the direction of Indian advancement. It was, naturally, not seldom the case that he was unable to prevail, for he had to deal with a chief whose opinions on many questions were diametrically opposed to his own : but the liberal character of much of Sir Charles Elliott's administration bears striking testimony to the fact that while the hand at the helm might be that of a reactionary Esau, the voice was often that of a very opposite Jacob. Nor is it one of the least remarkable features of a remarkable partnership that so dissimilar a pair should have remained throughout on terms of the closest personal friendship, and that their intimacy should continue unimpaired in the days of their retirement.

While Sir Henry Cotton was in Calcutta, there were few men more busy from morning till night ; and he has been with reason described as one of the hardest worked men in India. For more than three years he held the office of Honorary Secretary to the Bengal Branch of Lady Dufferin's Fund; no one was better known at

Municipal meetings while he was a member of the Corporation ; and both at the Senate House and in the Syndicate he has taken his full share of work as a Fellow of the Calcutta University. His private life and habits are simple, and few are aware of the extent of his private charity. Many educated natives of Bengal owe their worldly position to his discriminating kindness : and it may safely be said that rarely has an Englishman counted more Indians among his friends. His doors were always open to visitors, high and low, and even the poorest left his presence cheered by kind words and sympathy. More than most men, he possesses that charm of manner which wins the loyalty of subordinates : and it is one of his proudest boasts that never once during the course of his career has he had occasion to fine a servant or employé.

Sir Henry Cotton is an enthusiastic advocate of exercise, athletic sports, and games. In his student days, he was an active Swiss mountaineer, and climbed Mont Blanc on the 20th August, 1863, before he was 18 years of age ; and most of the well-known peaks and passes at Chamounix, Zermatt and in the Oberland were scaled by him in the sixties when their ascent was no common feat. In 1866, he was elected a member of the Alpine Club. At Brighton College, he distinguished himself as a swimmer and fencer. He was once a player at rackets, and was for long one of the best-known lawn-tennis players both in Calcutta, and at the Hyde Park Tennis Club in London. He is devoted to chess and with his friends, Sir Henry Harrison and the late Mr. Robert Steel, C.S.I., was a great patron of the game among Indian players. At home, as a member of the M. C. C. he is a *habitue* of Lords, and his face is a familiar one at the

Savile Club. He is a fluent and practised debater and speaker, and a natural hesitation which has always remained with him only serves to ensure a remarkable clearness in his enunciation.

In his domestic relations he has been singularly happy. He married early and has three sons, the two elder of whom are in India, the one, Mr. H. E. A. Cotton, as an Advocate of the Calcutta High Court, the other, of whom mention has already been made, as a Madras Civilian. Of them it suffices to say that, while the younger is upholding the family reputation for administrative ability and sympathy for those over whom he wields authority, the elder is not only achieving success in his profession but takes an active part in public affairs as an energetic and outspoken representative of the rate-payers on the Corporation of Calcutta. The third and youngest son, Mr. A. L. Cotton, has devoted himself to literary pursuits in England. Sir Henry's younger brother, Mr. James S. Cotton, after a distinguished career at Oxford, became a Fellow of Queen's College, and was until recently Editor of the *Academy*. He is the author of a valuable treatise on India in the *English Citizen* series, published some years ago by Macmillan, and also wrote the Life of Mount-stuart Elphinstone in Sir William Hunter's series of "Rulers of India." His knowledge of India is remarkable and has obtained for him from the India Office the important commission, on which he is at present engaged, of preparing a new edition of Sir William Hunter's *Gazetteer of India*.

Whatever outside opinions may be held about Sir Henry Cotton's political and religious views, the influence of his personality upon Indian policy and Indian aspirations has been of the most striking character. In respect

of administrative talent, intellectual power and literary accomplishments, he will always be ranked as one of the foremost members of the Bengal Civil Service. And it would be hard to point to any other civilian administrator whose popularity with the people of the country has been so universal and so noteworthy. On the occasion of his departure from India in May, 1902, the sentiments of admiration and affection entertained for him by the Indian public found vent in a succession of demonstrations which can only be paralleled by those which accompanied the laying down by Lord Ripon of his eventful Viceroyalty. It was sorrowfully realized that in the ordinary course of events Sir Henry would not return to India at the expiry of the leave granted to him, as he was due to retire in the following October under the operation of the thirty-five years' rule : and all sections of the Indian community came forward to place upon record their appreciation of his services and their regret at the termination of his official connection with the land for which he had made so many sacrifices. Among purely local manifestations, the gathering of the Siems or semi-independent Khasia hill-chiefs at Shillong, is worthy of special mention. The incident was a unique one in the history of the hill-tribes, and the presenters of the address gave special prominence to the fact that they had never before assembled to render a similar honour to a retiring Chief Commissioner. At Shillong also, Sir Henry and Lady Cotton were entertained by the European residents of the station at a dinner presided over by General Sir A. J. F. Reid, commanding the Assam District, and in his reply to the toast of the evening, which was proposed by Mr. Porteous, the Commissioner and Judge of the Assam Valley Districts, Sir Henry made the memorable speech to which

reference has already been made and in which he disclaimed all idea of hostility to the tea industry, and claiming to be judged by his actions, averred that he had done more to advance its interests than any of his predecessors. At Gauhati, the first stage on his homeward journey, the good-will of the inhabitants of Assam found expression in a crowded meeting at which representatives from every district assembled to bid farewell to their departing ruler. Their feelings were eloquently put into words by His Highness the Maharajah of Durbhunga, who has been for some years past a constant visitor to Kamakhya in the Kamroop district and has invariably taken a keen interest in the affairs of the province. His Highness' speech on the occasion of the presentation of the farewell address, was a remarkable one in many ways. After dwelling upon the manner in which Sir Henry had succeeded in winning the affection and the confidence of the people of the country, the Maharajah went on to quote the famous order passed by Lord Dalhousie on a case in which he had successfully insisted on justice being done, at the risk of a tumult. "I circulate these papers," wrote the Governor-General, "They are an instance of the principle that we should do what is right without fear of the consequences." No quotation could have been more apposite: for in these noble sentiments is to be found the keynote of Sir Henry's whole official career. He has always possessed the courage of his convictions: and no one has ever been able to say of him that he has shirked responsibility for his actions in the face of outcry and agitation or endeavoured to shift it to the shoulders of those whose duty it was to carry out his order. To the successful politician of to-day the doctrine of the subordination of politics to

morals may seem outworn : but intelligent opinion in India, as elsewhere, retains its own method of appraising the merits of public men. In the case of Sir Henry Cotton this was made strikingly apparent, not only by the Assamese but also by the people of Bengal, with whom he has from first to last been a special favourite. He was received at the Sealdah station on his arrival in Calcutta by an assembly of more than a thousand persons : and the presence in the chair at the Town Hall two days later of Maharajah Bahadur Sir Jotendro Mohun Tagore, K.C.S.I., afforded genuine and unmistakable evidence of the universality and spontaneity of the feeling which animated the native community. Nor were these manifestations confined to this side of India. At every principal railway station on the line between Calcutta and Bombay, Sir Henry was the recipient of an ovation : and in Bombay itself the Presidency Association presented him with an address prior to his embarkation on the mail-steamer—a compliment which has never before been paid to a civilian administrator from another province, and which Sir Henry must have all the more valued, as he has never had any connection, official or otherwise, with the Western Presidency.

It is impossible to close this brief record of Sir Henry Cotton's Indian career without a reference to the deep disappointment felt throughout the Lower Provinces at his inability to secure from Lord Curzon adequate recognition of his overwhelming claims to the Lieutenant Governorship of Bengal. Too much need not be made of the circumstance that the question of a successor to Sir John Woodburn was suffered deliberately (as it appeared) to remain in abeyance until the rules of the service had compelled Sir Henry Cotton to send

in his papers, in spite of the prolonged illness which rendered the late Lieutenant-Governor incapable for several months of discharging his heavy and responsible duties. But the fact remains that it was the ardent wish of the whole people of Bengal, voiced by such undisputed leaders of public opinion as the Maharajah of Durbunga and Maharajah Bahadur Sir Jotendro Mohun Tagore, that Sir Henry Cotton should be appointed to succeed Sir John Woodburn, and that that wish was not permitted to be accomplished. To a man of Sir Henry's energy and intellectuality retirement has not, it is true, meant that extinction which takes place in the case of so many Anglo Indian officials : and his adoption as Liberal candidate for East Nottingham bids fair to put it in his power to befriend India from his place in the House of Commons as powerfully in the future as he has done in the past. But the people of Bengal would fain have kept him a little longer in their midst. Ever since the Ilbert Bill controversy they have cherished the dream of finding him before the close of his career at the head of the administration of their Province. When Sir Rivers Thompson ignored his claims to promotion to the Secretariat, the Indian Press entered a vigorous protest against what it not unjustly stigmatized as a piece of palpable injustice. When Sir Steuart Bayley repaired the wrong, the whole country approved of the then Lieutenant-Governor's action. When Sir Charles Elliott showed his appreciation of unostentatious worth by appointing him as Chief Secretary, the joy of the Indian community knew no bounds. Lastly, when he was placed in charge of the province of Assam, all Bengal hoped that Shillong might prove the stepping-stone to Belvedere. They will never cease to deplore the unhappy

fate that has deprived them of the man of their choice, whose sympathy for them and their legitimate aims and aspirations has always been, through good-repute and ill-repute, unswerving and unceasing. The memory of Sir Henry Cotton will be perpetuated in marble by a grateful people in the Calcutta Town Hall and in the College at Gauhati which bears his name: but it will not live in marble alone. "For thirty-five years," said the Maharajah of Durbhunga at Gauhati in words that will find an echo in every heart in Bengal, "for thirty-five years, he has devoted himself to us and has won our affection and confidence to an extent which does not fall to the lot of many officials in India, and we cannot bear to think that a few arbitrary months are to shut him out from closing his career among us in the highest post that lies open to an Indian Government servant. But, if it so be that he does not return to us, we must content ourselves with wishing him a long and happy life in England, secure in the recollection of good deeds performed and valiant service rendered, and conscious of the heart-felt affection and regard of the thousands over whom he has exercised authority not only in Assam but in Bengal. Sir Henry Cotton knows us, and we know him: and there is a bond between us, which neither time nor space can loosen or sever."

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ADDRESS AT THE ANNUAL PRIZE-GIVING  
AT THE  
ORIENTAL SEMINARY, CALCUTTA

*14th December, 1885.*

MAHARAJAH AND GENTLEMEN,—No doubt the most pleasant part of a ceremony of this nature is the prize-giving. It is always a pleasure to distribute rewards, and, speaking from an experience of bye-gone years, I am quite sure that it is a great pleasure to the boys who receive them and not to them only but to their friends in the school who are glad on account of their school-fellows' success. But this annual ceremony is more than a mere distribution of prizes. We are here not only to distribute prizes to successful students but also to commemorate the founder of this institution and its principal benefactors. This spirit of commemoration is one which is eminently congenial to the Hindu disposition and character. It is, if I may say so, an instinct in Hinduism to commemorate the past and there is probably no institution in India, certainly not in Calcutta, in which this feeling—this spirit of commemoration—can be more appropriately evoked than in the case of the Oriental Seminary. When therefore I recall the history of the school I feel that I am discharging an essential duty in commemorating the services of our founder,

Baboo Gour Mohun Addy who is so deservedly described in the excellent report which has been circulated for this year as "a great benefactor of man." Baboo Gour Mohun Addy founded the Oriental Seminary in 1829 and up to the time of his death,—he was accidentally drowned in 1845,—was the life and soul of the institution. Then I think that among our patrons we ought most cordially to commemorate the members of the Krishna Raj family of Sobha Bazar. Raja Kali Krishna was President of the institution and he was succeeded in that office by Raja Komol Krishna whose death a few days ago has been so feelingly alluded to by your Secretary. Our late President besides having been a liberal subscriber to the School was indefatigable in supporting it by every means in his power. He has now been succeeded by another brother, the venerable and distinguished nobleman whom I have the honour of seeing at my right hand, and I am glad to think that in the Maharajah Narendra Krishna the eminent family of Sobha Bazar will continue to be associated actively and beneficially in the future of the Seminary.

There is this to be said of the Oriental Seminary that it has included in the roll of its students many distinguished names. All schools are proud of the eminent men who have been educated in them. The Winchester boy is proud to traverse cloisters associated in his mind with the names of Bishop Ken and Herbert Stuart. The Eton boy is proud to be at a school where Mr. Gladstone and

Canning were educated ; the Harrow boy points with pride to the names of Lord Palmerstone and Lord Byron on the walls of his school. And in like manner the boys of the Oriental Seminary may point with pride to the names of distinguished men who have been educated here. There are eminent scions of the school still living but it would be premature to speak of them. Speaking of those only who are dead I will mention the name of Mr. Justice Sumbhoo Nath Pundit who was the first Indian Judge who took his seat in the High Court. I will mention an even greater name, that of the late Rai Kristo Das Pal. His name is so well-known that all educated people in India are familiar with it and Europeans and Indians alike have vied to do honour to his memory. Of him I will only say on this occasion that he seems to have been the presiding genius of the transition through which India is passing. No other man could have discharged the difficult functions that devolved on him so well and with so much tact : he has paved the way for his successors. A third great name, although possibly less familiar to some of you than it should be, is that of Baboo Grish Chunder Ghose. Though only a subordinate in a Government Office he was a man of exceptional ability and had he lived in more favourable times he would have undoubtedly attained a high position in the state.

I am glad to have heard it said, and to have observed it myself, that there is a greater sense of public spirit among the Bengali youth than was

formerly the case. It would ill become an Englishman educated in a free country, whose great boast is of freedom, to discourage the growth of that national and public spirit which is observable on all sides. The sense of self-respect which accompanies the sense of independence is spreading in India and I venture to hope that it will spread with even greater rapidity. I trust that in the future it may be more encouraged by the policy of Government which as laid down by the most eminent of English statesmen, Mr. Gladstone, is "carefully and systematically to enlarge the liberties of the Indian people." I hope that some of the boys who are now being educated at the Oriental Seminary will have opportunities for distinguishing themselves in the public service in a higher sphere than was open to Babu Grish Chunder Ghose or to Rai Kristo Das Pal. At the same time, while I hope for you that wider career, I sincerely trust that the influences to which you are subject will not draw you away from those important convictions in which your fathers and grandfathers were brought up. I trust that nothing will ever weaken that sentiment of respect and reverence which you feel, and rightly feel towards your friends and those who are placed in authority over you, and especially towards the great men who have passed away. The religious sentiment which is known in your vernacular as *Bhakti* is one of those important considerations without which no country can ever become truly great and no real self-respect is

possible. I think meanly of those who in their enthusiastic admiration of the present neglect to pay their due tribute to the glories of the past. I trust therefore that while a spirit of independence is slowly growing among you, the higher sentiments of faith, devotion and reverence may not be weakened by anything which the education you are receiving at this Seminary or may receive elsewhere has a tendency to impart. Whatever you may do, whatever your employment in life may be, do not forget to cherish those high instincts of reverence, obedience and duty which are the most important virtues to which the youth of this or any other country can aspire.

ADDRESS AT THE ANNUAL PRIZE-GIVING  
AT THE  
RIPON COLLEGE, CALCUTTA

*13th March, 1886.*

I have great pleasure in coming here to assist at to-day's ceremony, and there is more than one special reason why I am so pleased. In the first place this is an unaided institution, independent of Government aid, and I am always glad to encourage such institutions by all means in my power. I am far from depreciating the invaluable service which the British Government has rendered to this country, by disseminating education broadcast amongst the people. It will always be the imperishable glory of my countrymen that they did not hesitate to extend the priceless boon of Western education to their Indian fellow-subjects. It would have been possible, as certain narrow-minded English administrators at one time recommended should be done, to refuse education, to repress and discourage all progress in knowledge and so avowedly retain the Indian nations in a subordinate condition, with a set purpose of preventing their advance to freedom. But wiser and more liberal counsels prevailed, and the progress of education, deliberately encouraged, has rendered it impossible for the British Government to attempt to rule on principles only suited to a slavish and

ignorant population. You Indian gentlemen, and you boys, who have received and are receiving this boon of education, ought always to be grateful—you are grateful—to the enlightened English statesmen through whose influence English education has become firmly established in this country. It was impossible for a beginning to have been made without official assistance. But now I am thankful to see—the evidence of an institution like the •Ripon College is of itself sufficient to show—that the educational movement in India has taken firm and independent root, and is capable of holding its own without any artificial stimulus. The Ripon College and I as am well aware, many other institutions of a similar character, unaided by Government or by Missionary Societies, independent in the strictest sense of the word, are now flourishing with hundreds of English-speaking scholars, and set an example in instruction, discipline, and moral training, which the older schools and colleges may well envy. I congratulate the management of this and similar colleges on such a result, and I look upon it as the happiest augury of future progress and improvement. The great problem for solution before you all is the grafting of Western ideas on to an Oriental stock. This problem I now see is being successfully attempted. It is not soluble by Government ; it is soluble by you the professors and teachers of these institutions who, endowed with the best knowledge Western civilisation can impart, have at the same time not

lost sight of the traditions of your own past. The establishment of independent colleges such as this, and the success they have gained, affords much ground for hopeful satisfaction. And I am pleased, gentlemen, to be here to-day for another reason. This college is called after the name of our late Viceroy, Lord Ripon. I venerate his name ; you all venerate it : you and your children's children will always utter the name of Ripon with reverence and affection. I congratulate you, boys, on being educated at the Ripon College. You will always be proud of having been at a college associated with the name of a Viceroy who identified himself with the cause of the Indian people, and who, although he thereby incurred odium and obloquy from a few, has won the gratitude of millions. My boys, let the name of Ripon be a beacon and support to you throughout your lives. Many of you have doubtless a hard and trying career before you. But do not lose heart if you seem to fail : be persistent : be resolute : hold fast by your enthusiasm. Remember that no great work can be done in this world without earnestness and enthusiasm. The greatest virtue of Lord Ripon, if I may venture to say so, was his moral earnestness. Be earnest, therefore, like he was, in all that you do, and all that you may attempt. You will often be disappointed ; you will perhaps see inferior men pass by you in the struggle of life : but if you preserve your earnestness and

enthusiasm you will not be downcast ; eventually you will succeed,

Work, for the night is coming,  
 Work, thro' the morning hours ;  
 Work, while the dew is sparkling,  
 Work, 'mid springing flowers ;  
 Work, when the day grows brighter,  
 Work, in the glowing sun ;  
 Work, for the night is coming.  
 When man's work is done.

There is another word I wish to say to you on this occasion. It is a subject which was admirably discussed by my friend, Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar, in the address which he gave you from this place at your last commemoration. I then heard him speak, and I now desire to endorse his advice. The substance of his exhortation was that you should honour and cultivate the sense of your own self-respect. A deficiency in self-respect is a defect of the Oriental character, and it is with unfeigned pleasure that I observe that one result of the introduction of Western ideas and of English education has been to encourage a growth of independence and self-respect among the youthful and rising generation. This healthy tendency may be abused and it is possible that in some cases the school boys of Bengal have merited the attacks which have been made upon them by certain sections of the community. I have no sympathy with such attacks, but they have been made, and may be justified. If they can be justified, let both students and teachers take warning. A spirit of independence must not be allowed to degenerate into lawlessness and license.

The Indian races are pre-eminent for their grateful, reverential, and religious instincts ; these are Oriental virtues which you must allow nothing to obliterate : at the same time, undismayed by hostile criticism, you must foster self-respect, self-control, and all those emphatically Occidental virtues which are the outcome of the struggles for freedom, which have only been successful after centuries of effort in Western Europe.

ADDRESS AT THE ANNUAL PRIZE-GIVING  
AT THE  
ORIENTAL SEMINARY, CALCUTTA

*January, 1889.*

MY pleasure in being among you to-day is dashed with a sense of regret that it is my first duty to allude to the death of Baboo Horo Kristo Addy who was associated with this institution from the date of its foundation. The Oriental Seminary boasts of being the oldest independent Seminary in Calcutta, the oldest school that is, which is maintained upon an entirely self-supporting basis. This basis it owes to the energy of Baboo Gour Mohan Addy, whose name it bore for many years. Baboo Horo Kristo Addy was the brother of Gour Mohan and when the latter was carried away by an accident Baboo Horo Kristo Addy took the burden of management on his shoulders, and continued to be proprietor of the school for 24 years until 1869, when he transferred his direct responsibility to the committee of management under which the school is still worked. He was an old man when he died, but his interest in the school continued to the last. His death therefore snaps one of the links which bind the present to the past. On an occasion of this kind it is especially our duty to commemorate the services of those to whom we are especially indebted and to-day it seems expedient to associate the name of Baboo

Horo Kristo Addy exclusively with our commemoration.

And now I will, as I am wont to do, make a few remarks upon wider questions. The people of India are passing through a social and moral crisis. Every crisis of this sort is accompanied with danger ; nor can it be denied that many deleterious influences have been at work which fill those who have the interest of this country at heart with anxiety. A nation may be moulded by two influences. The first of these is the concurrent and coincident effect produced by living men within it at any one particular time, converging towards one common end, and bringing together the individuals, families and groups of men towards one common purpose. This is the most obvious influence ; but there is a second which though less obvious, is really of wider reach and profounder importance. I mean the influence exerted by the past on the present. The influence of past generations acts upon the present with ever increasing effect. The struggles of the past, the social agonies through which our ancestors have gone, the creeds of the past, all combine with a concentrating influence which must regulate the present and, through the present, control the future. This second influence is sometimes forgotten by those who advise you in the present crisis. Undoubtedly a certain amount of disorder prevails, and that disorder is due to the impact of a foreign civilization, to the letting loose amongst you of the science and literature of a

foreign country. This has a disturbing influence, and the difficulty before you is to control this disorder with due regard for the influence of the past, or, in other words, to ensure that the progress now taking place, however much it may be modified by the tendencies I have referred to, may still have its roots in the past. We cannot afford to give up, to reject, to spurn the illustrious past. This disturbed state of things is more observable in the schools than elsewhere, for it is there that the germs of disturbance are laid. Hence one of the commonest charges brought against the present generation is that it is disrespectful, discourteous and even insolent to those above them. These charges are not always made in a friendly spirit and they are generally exaggerated, but, when the bias has been discounted, it must I think be admitted that they contain an element of truth. However this may be I am glad to say that the effect produced when English civilisation first struck upon this country was far worse than now. I do not think we shall find youths now-a-days so completely hostile to their own past as they were forty or fifty years ago. We should not now hear of a Hindu youth scarcely out of his teens throwing a piece of beef into a Brahmin's puja-bari ; but such a thing has been known in the past. The young men of half a century ago were indeed in a more strained condition than now, but the effect is more marked now-a-days to the public eye because for every one student then there are now a hundred.

It is this tendency to disorder which it is the most important function of the elders of the present generation to control. As to how this is to be done I believe for my part that little good is likely to result from the introduction of moral text books into schools or from any similar panacea. Boys are boys all the world over and nowhere do I believe that their character has been moulded for good or bad by the books they read as school exercises: it is moulded partially by their teachers, more by their friends and associates and most of all by their parents, their brothers and sisters at home. It is the influence of the family circle which shapes the *morale* of youths in all countries and certainly not less in India than elsewhere. Where then we see a tendency in the young generation to become disrespectful and turbulent let us remember that the blame belongs not only to the system of education but also to the parents of the boys who do not always exercise over them that healthy influence which they ought to have. I cannot too repeatedly and emphatically impress upon you all the duty of respect for authority, of reverence to parents, elders and teachers and to the teachings of your past; of respect for the social system with which you are surrounded, and above all of self-respect, the product of obedience and reverence, which will keep a boy from doing what is wrong.

ADDRESS AT THE ANNUAL PRIZE-GIVING  
AT THE  
ORIENTAL SEMINARY, CALCUTTA

*1st February, 1891.*

MAHARAJAH AND GENTLEMEN,—I am much interested, in the prosperity of this institution, if for no other reason than because it is the oldest independent school in Calcutta. I am glad to avail myself of every opportunity of encouraging schools which are founded by gentlemen of this country and maintained by them independently. I consider the result of the past year as given in the report to be decidedly satisfactory, and it is a credit to the teaching body that of fifteen students ten should have successfully passed the Entrance Examination, and I also observe with special satisfaction the remarks contained in the report regarding the discipline and sound moral teaching which have been imparted to the students.

\* \* \* \*

It is not my practice to allude to old students who are still living but I may perhaps be permitted so far to transgress that sound rule as to observe with pleasure the presence amongst us of Baboo Sambhoo Chunder Mookherjea who was a distinguished student of this institution. The past year has witnessed the death of two men who were students of the Oriental Seminary, to whom I wish

to allude : the first of these is the Superintendent Babu Gopal Chunder Bose, who was connected with the Oriental Seminary for over 25 years, and whose loss is undoubtedly very great ; the other is Babu Bhoggobutty Churn Ghose—the father of one of my most intimate friends Mr. N. N. Ghose who was for some years Government Pleader in the Rungpore District and pleader of the High Court. He was an old student of the Seminary, and entertained a feeling of grateful recollection for the education he received here.

On every occasion on which I have spoken at these meetings, I have dwelt on the importance of moral discipline and self-control, and I propose, gentlemen, with your permission, to address you a few observations to-day on the same subject. I shall speak very guardedly, and carefully, and I fear, however carefully I may speak that I may fall into some expression which may occasion irritation amongst those who hear me; but I trust they will pardon me if I do so. No one can be more reluctant than I am to seem to interfere with the social customs sanctioned by generations amongst people among whom I am only a sojourner and a stranger and the only reason I venture to do so is because I am sure that to-day I am amongst friends, and I am also, I think, justified in appealing to the sympathy and kindly feeling which you will all acknowledge I have towards your countrymen. You will therefore, bear kindly with me if in any remarks I am now going to make, I may ruffle sentiments

which you have long cherished. I wish to make a few remarks—not on the subject which is now agitating society ; not on the subject of the legislation which is now pending in His Excellency's Council, but on a more general question which underlies that, although it is not immediately connected with it. It is the subject of infant early marriage. I wish to make a few remarks on that subject from the moral stand-point. Nearly ten years ago I wrote in a letter which has been republished in *New India* :—“ I have never heard any sound argument adduced in favour of the institution of infant marriage. It is intended no doubt as a preventive of immorality. But even from this aspect it is a failure, for it allows boys and girls a free scope and indulgence in their passions at an age when they have reached neither physical nor mental maturity, and when the observance of chastity ought to have been enforced on them as a moral discipline.” With your permission I will expatiate a little on this theme. It is absolutely essential, in every proper system of education, to accustom the young to moral discipline. The cultivation of chastity and continence, and the complete elimination, as far as possible, of impure thoughts and associations are the first conditions of moral training which it is incumbent on the parents, and especially on the mother, to impose on their children. Just as truthfulness is insisted on from the earliest years, and obedience and reverence are rightly taught as primary virtues ; as greediness in

all forms is discouraged and bodily cleanliness inculcated, so it is equally the duty of parents to keep the minds of their children unsoiled by contact with impure suggestions, and their bodies free from any opportunity of degrading temptation. As the young grow up to maturity, the necessity increases of exercising the strictest discipline over every tendency to give way to their passion. The moral training of the young must always be lamentably neglected so long as the most selfish of all instincts is undisciplined and uncontrolled. The key-note of moral discipline is self-control. The alleged necessity of yielding to sexual appetite at an early age is utterly without foundation, and is disproved by the fact that in innumerable cases the desire has been successfully overcome. A life of labour, and, still more, the constant influence of deep family affection, are the best protection in all cases. It is a mother's holiest duty to secure her son against vice, and it is nothing short of a gross insult to human nature to assume that the family influence rightly exercised is not sufficient to preserve the younger members of the family pure in body and mind. Nothing can be more objectionable from the point of view of sexual morality than that from their early infancy boys and girls should be accustomed to hear from their parents and grand-parents about marriage, and the relationship between husbands and wives. But that Hindoo children are so accustomed cannot be denied. The evil is a palpable one, which it is incumbent on the

educated members of the community to eradicate. Legislation or no legislation and be the age of consent under the Penal Code what it may, there is need of a complete revolution in public opinion on this serious and momentous question. Among Hindoo families, as at present constituted, the children are not subjected to the moral discipline which is essential to the proper growth of their body, character, and intellect. Early marriage, and all the associations connected with it, are destructive to purity and self-control. Nothing is commoner than to have early marriage defended from a moral standpoint ; but never was there a grosser perversion of the very essence and object of true moral discipline, and it is, above all others, from the point of view of morality that early marriage stands self-condemned.

ADDRESS AT THE ANNUAL PRIZE-GIVING  
AT THE  
ORIENTAL SEMINARY

*4th February 1894.*

MAHARAJAII AND GENTLEMEN,—I need hardly say that I am very glad to be with you again. This is the eighth consecutive year in which I have been present at the prize distribution of the Oriental Seminary. It is the fifth occasion in which I have been honoured by being asked to distribute prizes to the successful students. I think, I may fairly say that I come as an old friend amongst you. I recognize several of the boys who have come to receive their prizes, and I recognize around me parents of the students as well as gentlemen who themselves were students in this Seminary years ago. I conceive, that on every occasion in which an Annual Meeting of the Oriental Seminary is held the name of Gour Mohun Addy should be brought prominently forward, either by our President, or by the Honorary Secretary, or by the gentleman who may be selected to distribute the prizes. It is extremely important on occasions of this kind to recall the name of the founder of this Institution and of others who have since endowed it liberally. Among our benefactors, I must to-day allude prominently to Mr. George Yule. Your Honorary

Secretary, my old friend, Baboo Bacharam Chatterjee, said that the Committee record his death with deep sorrow. It was a heavy loss to the Institution, and a grievous loss to the managers and students. Gentlemen, I may say that the death of Mr. George Yule is grievously felt not only by the managers of this Institution, but by the whole of India. He was one of my dearest friends and I am in a better position than most men to appreciate the value of his services to this country. I may recall to your memory an incident. It was after Mr. George Yule had held the post of Sheriff of Calcutta for the year that he came to me and said, "I have earned something in my capacity as Sheriff. I do not wish to appropriate those receipts to myself, but I wish to expend them in some useful way for the benefit of educational Institutions in Calcutta," and he placed a sum of money in my hands, amounting to Rs. 3,000 which he asked me to distribute as I might think best. I distributed that sum to Institutions which I considered as deserving and which were unassisted by Government aid. Among others, a Scholarship for a certain term of years—six years I believe—was founded for the Oriental Seminary. That Scholarship has now lapsed. The funds are exhausted, but I trust that among the wealthy benefactors of this Seminary, there are those to be found who will renew the Scholarship in Mr. Yule's name, and, if possible, make it a permanent endowment. Mr. Yule devoted himself

for many years to the good of the people of this country. There was no false pride about him. He associated with your countrymen on terms of equality. He used to visit them, and they visited him. There was warm friendship between him and a very large number of the natives of Bengal. He continued to aid them in England, and his death last year was a very great loss to India. I am pleased to see that there are certain number of Scholarships year by year bestowed on successful students of this Seminary. I heard to-day from your Honorary Secretary that a Scholarship has this year been granted by a benevolent friend. These Scholarships are of very great assistance to deserving students. For the most part, the students who attend an Institution of this kind are very poor, the sons of poor parents, and a Scholarship which they can attain by industry and successfully passing an examination is a great boon to them, and those who are in a position to do so, and can endow a School of this kind, deserve to be classed among public benefactors.

On former occasions I have spoken of the force of moral obligations. I have always alluded to the necessity of courtesy, good manners, and obedience to those who are placed in authority over you. I observe that His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, who addressed you last year, also alluded to the same topic. This is a question of very great importance. There is no country in the world,—I assert this with confidence,—where

the people are naturally distinguished by such good manners and such courtesy as in India and it would be a great misfortune if the rising generation were to fall off in this direction. To-day I wish to add a few observations on the importance of earnestness and persistency. I have distributed prizes this afternoon to a variety of successful students. No doubt, it is a great gratification for the boys to receive the reward of their labour ; at the same time, it is only a small portion who have succeeded, and a great many of the students who laboured hard, and who deserved prizes, have not received them. This is what they will find in life. It may be said that life is a series of failures tempered by occasional success. But men with character in them, with earnestness in them, are not discouraged by such failure. They persevere, and in time their efforts are rewarded with success although not always success in the direction in which they had aimed. There are many who are discouraged at the first failure, but these are not the men who succeed in making a name for themselves in life. Although you may fail again and again, and again, yet you should persevere in your work, for you will have your reward, although not perhaps exactly as you expected it. I regard earnestness as one of the most valuable gifts a man can possess. No man ever became truly great who was not animated by this spirit of earnestness and persistency. The most brilliant men who have not been earnest have not been great. It is

only by earnestness that you make yourself great. This is the secret of success of the most eminent public men of whose career we are justly proud. Mr. Bright, Mr. Cobden, and Mr. Gladstone are conspicuous examples of what I mean and you will see that they have inspired earnestness and persistency in others. Of such a type was our late Viceroy Lord Ripon,—a man notable above all others for his sincerity and zeal. Therefore I would ask you to be earnest in your work under all conditions and all seasons. Do not be discouraged by failure. Be earnest and persistent, and you will do good to those among whom you are associated, and you will succeed in life and perchance become great men yourselves. And now gentlemen, before I sit down I wish prosperity to this Institution and happiness to the boys who are now students of it.

# SPEECH AT THE UNVEILING OF THE BUST OF THE LATE SIR HENRY HARRISON

*In the Calcutta Town Hall, May 31st 1893.*

MR. RITCHIE, MAHARAJAH AND GENTLEMEN,—I am sorry that it is not possible for his Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal to preside on this occasion. As you are aware, he has this very day made over charge of his office to his successor and leaves for England to seek a well-earned rest by to-night's mail. Sir Charles Elliot regrets as much as I do that he is not able to be present amongst us. But in the Lieutenant-Governor's unavoidable absence I hope I may venture to say that the honour of presiding at this ceremony devolves upon one whose privilege it was to have been a very dear and old friend of Sir Henry Harrison, and to have been associated with him perhaps more closely than any other man during the important period of his public career in Calcutta. It was therefore without hesitation, when it was found that the Lieutenant-Governor would be unable to be present, that I accepted your invitation, Sir, on behalf of the Municipal Commissioners, to preside to-day.

I need not descant on the features of Sir Henry Harrison's early career. He was a distinguished

member of the University of Oxford, and his portrait, among those of heroes of greater renown, adorns the Valhalla of the Oxford Union, where he laid the foundations of the persuasive eloquence which in later days he brought so nearly to perfection within these walls. As a District Officer in Bengal his reputation stood second to none ; no one ever displayed more conspicuous solicitude for the welfare of his people than he did, and it is with much satisfaction I observe that his services in the Midnapore district were recognised a few days ago by a public demonstration similar to the present, when his picture, in the Town Hall of Midnapore, was unveiled by Kumar Narendro Lall Khan. We are more concerned to-day with his career in Calcutta. It is a little more than twelve years ago that he was appointed to be Chairman of the Calcutta Corporation. The fabric of the Municipal government had then been rudely shaken and it was reserved for Sir Henry Harrison to achieve the distinction, which no one ever attained before him, of not only advancing important reforms but of gaining the confidence of the popular representatives of the city—with whom he identified himself heart and soul—and of thereby carrying out those reforms not inspite of the opinion of the majority of the Municipal Commissioners or in opposition to their wishes, but in cordial co-operation with them and with their active support. Now, gentlemen, it is a comparatively easy matter for the civic administrators of a great metropolis

to enforce their schemes of improvement when they are untrammelled by the attitude of the rate-payers and can move this way or that independently of public criticism and prejudice. The possession of this administrative faculty is not an uncommon gift. But it involves the higher qualifications of a statesman to take in hand progressive incasures and slowly and gradually, but yet firmly, persuade those whom they affect of their wisdom and necessity, and so accomplish the end in view through the instrumentality of the people and with their assistance. Sir Henry Harrison was possessed of these qualifications in a pre-eminent degree. Such a gift is rare. But Sir Henry Harrison has set an example in this respect which all future Chairmen of this Corporation if they are to emulate his successes, must endeavour to follow. To his success all of you who are now present will bear witness. What need have I to summarise the great changes which have taken place in Calcutta during the long period of his mayoralty ? For nine years he was Chairman of the Corporation, and the firm financial credit of the Commissioners, the innumerable sanitary reforms effected,—until, to use the words of a late Health Officer, Calcutta has, to sight and sense, undergone a revolution,—especially the extension of the water-supply and the conservancy of bustis, the opening out of the Central Road which has so deservedly, been called after his name, the increase in material prosperity in the city which, in consequence of

these improvements, has shown itself in so marked a degree that the value of the land in Calcutta generally may be said to have doubled, are evidence, if any were needed, of the successful manner in which Sir Henry Harrison discharged the duties of his responsible office. These happy results are the triumph of an administration in which the Chairman and Municipal Commissioners have worked together, and could only have been achieved through the exercise of the Chairman's power of conciliation—tempered by firmness—of patience and sympathy and tact. All these are rare gifts, but how admirably were they combined in Sir Henry Harrison. I have seen him during a stormy debate harassed and worried and wearied, bearing almost the whole brunt of the attack on his shoulders, but always unruffled in temper, always courteous and kindly, never over-bearing, and ultimately leading what seemed almost a forlorn hope to victory by virtue of his earnest persuasiveness and transparent sincerity. His eloquence demands from me more than a passing notice. It was ordinarily of the argumentative and persuasive type ; and if ever votes were won by speeches they were won by him. Of extraordinary readiness and fluency of speech, he possessed debating power in a remarkable degree, and I for one, as I listened to him with admiration in this Hall, and in the Council Chamber, could not but regret that he was not afforded the opportunity of displaying his talent in a wider sphere. I remember an eminent legal

luminary, now retired from India, who knew him well, once saying to me, after hearing Sir Henry Harrison speak, that if he had practised at the Bar in England he would have been Lord Chancellor. Who knows? Certain it is that we have had no other such orator in the ranks of the Civil Service in my time in India.

It cannot be said of Sir Henry Harrison that he had no enemies. He acted always in accordance with his conscience and from a high sense of duty, and he was often therefore brought into conflict with the most powerful interests. He never shrank from such conflict. At one time he championed this Municipal Corporation at a crisis when its liberties were assailed and its very existence at stake. He considered that the charges brought against the Municipal Commissioners were unjust and unfounded, and he defended the reputation of his colleagues with the utmost spirit. At that time, when he overcame this formidable coalition against the municipal independence of Calcutta, he stood on the highest pinnacle of fleeting popularity. But when he deemed it his duty as a Legislator in the Bengal Council to enquire into the question of municipal assessments and to remedy the abuses which prevailed by a fairer apportionment of the burdens upon the whole community, he brought down upon his head the vials of wrath from the influential classes who were affected by the change in the law. The personal attacks made upon him were almost unparalleled

in their bitterness, and still the echo of them remains. But Sir Henry Harrison was unmoved. He expounded his policy in an able and very temperate State paper which may still be read with advantage by all students of political economy. He did not allow his personal feelings to be influenced in any way, and while he excited much hostility, he was himself incapable of reciprocating any such sentiment.

The following comment was made on Sir Henry Harrison's public career in the 'Indian Nation' shortly after his death, and it correctly describes the character of the man:—"As a legislator he was especially anxious to guard the interests of the public, and as an executive officer of the Corporation he was especially generous in dealing with individual grievances. When he had to frame a rule he framed it with an eye to the public convenience alone; when as Chairman of the Corporation he found the rule to operate harshly in a particular case, he was ready to qualify the rule by an exercise of discretion, to temper justice with mercy." He was one of the kindest hearted of men. No one could have been more popular with his subordinates. No one could have been more averse to harshness and more conciliatory to individual rate-payers.

I have never known a Government official--with one solitary exception, the late Mr. Geddes, who was a warm friend of both Sir Henry Harrison and myself--who was more kind and devoted

to the people of this country and more genuinely sympathetic with the legitimate aspirations of the educated classes. His mind was cast in the largest and most liberal mould, and he took every opportunity, with judgment and discretion, of furthering their interests.

In the fullness of time Sir Henry Harrison was called to the dignified appointment of a Member of the Board of Revenue. He was not an ambitious man, and though his abilities would justly have entitled him to the highest promotion open to the Civil Service, he accepted this appointment as the fitting close of his active career. He continued to take a part in the civil life of this metropolis. There was naturally no more prominent citizen in Calcutta. He was the unfailing adviser of Government on all points connected with the welfare of the city. But he devoted himself mainly, as he was bound to do, to his revenue work. In the discharge of his duties he proceeded to Chittagong in the sultry month of May a little more than a year ago. There he was suddenly struck down. You will all recall the horror with which we read the telegram in the morning papers that Sir Henry Harrison and his eldest daughter had succumbed to an attack of cholera at Chittagong. The circumstances were very tragic and the shock to us was very great. As soon as the first feelings of grief had spent themselves, it was resolved by the Municipal representatives of Calcutta that the memory of his name should be perpetuated by more than one

memorial of a permanent character. The Harrison Road has been called after him. It was decided that a bust, which I understand has been subscribed for in nearly equal proportions by the members of the Corporation and the officials and subordinates of the Municipal Office, should be placed in his honour in the Town Hall. That bust is now before you, and it only remains for me to unveil the lineaments of one who, to all of us, was so well known, so respected, so honoured, and so dear. \*

# SPEECH AT THE TOWN HALL, CALCUTTA

AT A PUBLIC MEETING IN COMMEMORATION OF  
THE LATE NAWAB BAHADOOR

ABDUL LATIF, C. I. E.

*On the 11th August 1893.*

IT devolves on me to propose the first of the Resolutions at to-day's meeting, and I undertake this duty with peculiar satisfaction, because I was associated with the late Nawab Bahadur, both officially and in private life for a great many years and I am therefore in a position to certify, both on behalf of Government and of the people, to the many and valuable public services rendered by him during his long and honourable career, and also to the general sense of sorrow which has been felt at his death.

Nawab Abdul Latif Bahadur was in the service of Government as a Deputy Magistrate and Deputy Collector for about 36 years, and discharged his duties in an exemplary manner. But it is not in his capacity as a Government servant that we are called together to-day to do honour to his memory. We recognise in the late Nawab the leading representative of Calcutta Mahomedans who, during a career amongst us extending from 1859 to the date of his death, was always foremost

in every good work which would tend to ameliorate the condition and advance the prospects of his countrymen. In all public movements and proceedings he pre-eminently represented the Mahomedan community in this metropolis. He created the Mahomedan Literary Society, which I hope may long continue to prosper with undiminished lustre under the auspices of his son and successor. It is absolutely true that Nawab Abdul Latif did more to encourage the progress of education among Mahomedans than any other man in Bengal. It is true also, and this is perhaps the most distinguished service the late Nawab could render, that he devoted himself with characteristic assiduity, and with a success which would have been impossible in one less gifted by natural grace and dignity of manner, to establishing the existence of more cordial and friendly relations between both Mahomedans and Hindus, and Mahomedans and their European fellow subjects. He commanded the confidence of all classes, and he was the trusty adviser and counsellor of Government on matters affecting his own countrymen during successive administrations. The late Nawab was a self-made man, and owed his position in life to his own exertions. Of highly respectable but comparatively humble origin, he rose from being a teacher in a Madrassa to be a leader of his countrymen and one of the most prominent public men of the day. His merits were amply acknowledged. He served upon many Government Commissions of wide and far-reaching

importance. He was one of the civic representatives of Calcutta for thirty years, and a Fellow of the Calcutta University for a like period ; thrice he was appointed to be a member of the Bengal Legislative Council, and in all these responsible offices he acquitted himself in such a way as to earn universal approbation : on his retirement from Government employ he was awarded a special pension in recognition of the exceptional value of his services. In 1877 the title Khan Bahadur was conferred on him, in 1880 he received the title of Nawab, and in 1887 he was invested with the higher dignity of Nawab Bahadur. In 1883 he was honoured with the Companionship of the Order of the Indian Empire. The features of his career thus afford the strongest encouragement to other Mahomedans to endeavour to follow in his footsteps. But such a career is only open to those who labour as he did, without ceasing, for the welfare of others. Gentlemen, the death of Nawab Abdul Latif has created a loss which will not easily be replaced, and a sense of sorrow which time only can alleviate. It will be long before we forget his dignified appearance and courteous charm, his wise and friendly counsel, his judicious action on all questions of public policy, his loyal assistance to Government on all occasions, and, above all, his admirable and incomparable zeal in furthering the interests of his own countrymen.

SPEECH AT A CIVIL SERVICE DINNER  
GIVEN BY THE HON'BLE SIR CHARLES ELLIOTT,  
K.C.S.I., LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR OF BENGAL  
AT THE  
SHRUBBERRY, DARJILING.

*6th October 1894.*

YOUR HONOUR AND COMRADES ! I am indeed proud to be called on to respond on your behalf to the toast of the Civil Service ; and although I think there are others present who would have been able to discharge this duty in more eloquent terms, of this I am sure that there is not one amongst us who is more identified with the Service than I am or who could be more jealous of its honour. It was about the middle of the last century that my great grand-father came to India in the commercial service of the Honourable East India Company. My grand-father came out at the close of the last century when the constitution of the Service had already been organised on its present lines. He came to India before Haileybury had been established. My father who joined the service in 1831 was a representative Haileybury civilian. Then I came, the fourth of my name and race, a representative competition-wallah of the earlier days of competitive examinations. But I am not the last,

for I have a son who passed into the Civil Service two years ago and is now serving in Madras. I represent therefore a practically continuous service in this country extending over five generations, a distinction probably almost unique, of which any man may be proud. If I am worthy to respond to the toast of the evening, I would put it on these grounds. In your names, gentlemen, I cordially thank His Honour the Lieutenant Governor for the generous hospitality with which he has entertained us for the second time at a Civil Service dinner, and thank him also for the prospect which he has held out to us of meeting again next year. Nothing can be more delightful than these gatherings, when old friends meet again and revive memories of their old college days or more recent reminiscences of district work and talk over their aspirations and exchange ideas: when others meet for the first time those of whom they have often heard, but with whom they were not personally acquainted, and friendships are struck which last through life. But gentlemen, a reunion of this kind suggests considerations of more importance than those of a purely social and convivial character. We are members of a great Service which has enjoyed a splendid record in the past and we cannot but be conscious that we have entered upon a period of difficulty and trial, that changes are taking place all around us and that the noble Service to which we belong, is changing and must change with the times. How great a change have I witnessed

myself during my twenty-seven years of service ! How different are things now to what they were when I first came to this country ! I recall the heroes of my early days ; Frank Simson and George Morris, a relative of my own, Fraser Mac-Donell, Ross Mangles and Charles Buckland, whose son reflects lustre on the family name, although I am not aware that he has gained a reputation in the niche of fame to which I now refer,—these men were the idols of the Service in my youth and however great their merits as officials may have been, and I am bound to add they were great, it is nothing but the truth to say that they were household words among us for their powers in the camp and field, as mighty hunters with spear and gun, as men renowned for their fearlessness and valour. Alas ! no one has arisen or is likely to arise to take their places. The *churs* of Noakhali and Tumlook, the happy hunting grounds of the Brahmapootra are no longer the haven of the Civilian's holiday. No ! gentlemen : the times are changed, the demon of work has marked us for its own, and the leisure which our predecessors enjoyed and turned to such good use is denied to us. Work is now our devotion and our recreation. The Civil Service has always been famous for its working powers, and surely I may say that in our capacity for work we outrun the past. It is our boast that we turn our hands to any duty and, if I may use a homely proverb, we are Jacks of all trades while it is not true that we are masters

of none. I was lately entertained in reading the last Administration Report of my accomplished friend Mr. Grimley, which his Honour the Lieutenant Governor has rightly described as very pleasantly written, to find the following description of the work of a civilian in the province over which he presides. "He may be required to prepare mining or forest leases of large tracts of country, to determine rates of royalty or minerals and metals, to draw up an elaborate scheme for the management of protected waste lands, to interpret and determine ancient feudal customs and their modern applications, and to decide boundary disputes in uninhabited jungly tracts by a reference to uncertain topographical maps and to land marks of trees and stones which have nearly disappeared." This is work which Mr. Grimley, as you know, does with ease: but it is not Mr. Grimley only who is possessed of such versatility and resource: in the words of the merry ballad of Chevy Chase may I not say that we have amongst our numbers a hundred good as he! We are proud of our administrative capacity and proud with reason. But gentlemen—and I wish now to speak to you for some moments in a graver mood—there is something more expected from us than what is implied in the term administration. The times of change, in which we live, demand from us higher qualities than those of mere administrators. We must attain to statesmanship if we are to prove worthy of our position. I will not define what I mean

by this word, but I remember that John Bright on a memorable occasion declared that statesmanship consisted in foreseeing quite as much as in doing. Now we are passing through a period of transition in this country and no man can stem the flood of changes which are imminent, any more than could Canute at the suggestion of his fatuous courtiers withstand the tide, or Mrs. Partington dry up the rising Atlantic with her mop. We must adapt ourselves to the altered conditions of our environment, and it devolves on us who represent the Government of the country to exercise the influence and power with which we are vested by bridging over the transition so that changes shall take place with the minimum of friction or disturbance. The senior members of the Service like myself can foresee the difficulties of our situation ; but the sands of our official life are running out and the solution of them will not rest with us ; it is on you my younger friends with whom the responsibility mainly depends. The difficulties with which you are confronted are far greater than any of those with which the Civil Service has ever before been called on to deal, and you must show yourselves equal to overcoming them. You can only overcome them by foresight and by a policy of sympathy, patience, and conciliation. We are still a strong Service, and although greatly weakened in our organisation from causes I need not specify, we constitute a most powerful agency for ameliorating

the condition of the people and furthering the public weal. In the noble words of the late Laureate I would say of the Indian Civil Service :—

Tho' much is taken, much abides ; and tho'  
We are not now that strength which in old days  
Moved earth and heaven ; that which we are we are ;  
One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Never to yield in our inflexible devotion to duty and uprightness, and in our sympathy and affection for the people, among whom it is our lot to dwell. These are qualities for which the members of our illustrious Service have always been distinguished, and I am confident that in the future they are qualities we shall continue to maintain.

## SPEECH AT DIBRUGARI

IN RESPONSE TO AN ADDRESS OF WELCOME.

*December, 1896.*

MR. HENNIKER, COMMISSIONERS OF THE DIBRUGARI MUNICIPALITY, CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE RECEPTION COMMITTEE—I thank you very much for the addresses which have just been read to me, and not least for the addresses in Persian and Assamese poetry which form a very pleasing innovation on the ordinary procedure on these occasions. I was much gratified by the enthusiastic reception given to me on my arrival: the decoration of the streets, and the illuminations in the evening were worthy of the town of Dibrugarh, and the crowds who assembled at the *ghát* yesterday and the people collected in this hall to-day are ample evidence of the loyal spirit prevailing in this town. The municipality appears to me to be very well administered, great improvements have been effected from the funds placed at your disposal and I have no hesitation in saying here as I said at Gauhati, that the town compares most favourably with municipalities in Bengal of three or four times its size.

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In your general address you have very properly refrained from discussing any contentious subjects,

but you have said, and I was glad to hear it, that, when the time comes, you will "lay bare your hearts and disclose your wants, wishes, and aspirations." I hope that you will not forget your promise, and that in due course you will offer me your best advice, both in regard to any proposals put forward by Government and also in regard to any suggestions which may occur to you for the amelioration of this town or of the province as a whole. There are many of you here who I have no doubt will be capable of giving me very valuable assistance, and I hope that, when occasion serves, you will allow me to reap the benefit of your experience and local knowledge. There is the greater necessity for this in my case, for I have come as a comparative stranger to a province with the material and social conditions of which I am at present but imperfectly acquainted. You have said in your address that, "though the country is reported to be rich in agricultural, mineral, and material resources, little has as yet been done towards their development." This statement is indeed true ; but it is, I think, not the whole truth. I have travelled during the past month over a considerable portion of this valley, and I have been much impressed by the enormous tracts of excellent land which I have seen covered with a magnificent crop of jungle grass. But, on reaching this the most remote corner of the province, I am glad to recognise that great progress has been made, that the cultivation both of tea and of

ordinary food-grain crops has been, and still is being, widely extended, and that a vigorous attempt is being made to exploit your mineral resources. For these great results—or rather great beginnings—the indomitable energy and resources of the Assam Railways and Trading Company are largely responsible: I am told that there are tea gardens stretching on either side of the line, and that applications for land are still coming in: this is an excellent sign, and it is an obvious thing to say that nothing could benefit a wild and jungly country like this more than the extension and improvements of its communications.

The great tea industry has made Assam what it is, and it is good that land should be covered with tea bushes, but it is no less, and even more, desirable that land should be covered with food-grain crops. There are millions of acres of culturable land in Assam now lying in waste, and this represents millions of rupees which might be dug out of the soil, but are now allowed to lie useless like the talent wrapped in a napkin. The extension of ordinary cultivation in this district is small when compared with the enormous development of tea, and there is a larger area of good culturable land still available here than in other parts of Assam.

A great railway is, as you all know, now under construction in the province. I have travelled from Gauhati 80 miles along this railway to the furthest point to which the rails have been laid,

and for a considerable portion of the journey I travelled through grass jungle stretching to the horizon as far as the eye could see. If I am any judge of the matter, this land is most valuable and adapted for cultivation of almost every description. Portions of it are excellently suited for rice, elsewhere jute might be grown, and near Lumding, the junction where the line turns from the plain and winds its way through the hills to the Surma Valley, there is a dry zone where the annual rainfall, I am told by the Railway Engineers, does not exceed 36 inches, which might, I believe, be converted into a great wheat producing tract. The opening out of these vast expanses of waste land would be of the greatest benefit, both to the natives of the province and to the great tea industry. You are accustomed to the idea, and so, I presume, can hardly realise how surprised I feel when I am told of the large quantities of rice which planters are compelled to import from Bengal to feed their labourers. This province has a larger area of culturable land lying waste than any other province in India. The soil is fertile and the climate, with its abundant rainfall, favourable, and the province should be able not only to feed its large immigrant as well as its indigenous population, but also to export lakhs and lakhs of maunds of grain to Calcutta. What is required for the extension of cultivation is the combination of capital and labour. Capital already exists in many forms in this province. There are tea

gardens and coal mines and quarries, mineral oil wells are worked, I trust, with success, saw-mills have been erected, and some attempt has been made to exploit the forest area which contains an enormous amount of timber which might, I think, be worked more profitably and rapidly than is being done at present. Capital we have in many forms, and it is only reasonable to expect that, where capital is found able to provide itself with a safe, secure and profitable investment, labour will not be slow to follow. There are difficulties in the way no doubt, but difficulties are only made to be overcome, and I trust that the time is not far distant when the development and wealth of this province will have made great strides and when it will be no longer possible to describe Assam, as you have described it in your address, as one of the poorest and most backward provinces in India. It will be my greatest pride, gentlemen, if, when I make over the administration to my successor, I shall be able to say that I have done all that was in my power to advance Assam in the path of progress.

SPEECH AT THE ASSAM DINNER  
HELD AT THE TROCADERO RESTAURANT  
IN LONDON

*June 28th, 1900.*

I need hardly tell you with what pleasure I received the invitation from your committee to take the chair this evening. Though I am well aware that this distinguished honour has been conferred on me by virtue of the fact of my holding for the present the office of Chief Commissioner, yet I also feel that there is no one in this room who has the welfare of Assam more at heart or who has the interests of the province more within his keeping. I have already referred to the importance of the visit paid by the Viceroy to Assam during last cold weather. If I refer to the subject again with special advertence to some observations made by Lord Curzon on the occasion of his replying to addresses, and if I venture in some respects to criticize these remarks you will I am sure realise that I do so in a spirit of the truest respect to a Viceroy for whom I entertain so much admiration ; but I think it right in such a company as the present to explain what I believe to be the real facts of the case in regard to a few particulars in which I think it possible His Excellency may have been misled. Assam has been called the

Cinderella of India. This epigrammatic expression is I believe traceable to a former Secretary to the Government of India, Mr. Barclay Chapman, though it has been attributed to many others. It is true that Assam is the Cinderella of India and I regret that the province is still in the position of the poor girl in her slovenly clothes waiting for the visit of the Fairy Prince who I would fain hope has at last appeared in the person of Lord Curzon. His Excellency said in reply to an address presented by Mr. Buckingham—than whom no one has done more to forward the interests of the tea industry—“ It is not fair of you to tax the Government of India with neglect : as a fact it has always taken a very great interest in the province : but the true secret of the woes of Assam is the same as that which Mr. Disraeli said was the true secret of the woes of Ireland. He said that Ireland lay under weeping skies sorrounded by a melancholy ocean.” This was intended by Lord Curzon to indicate that the woes of Assam were due to natural causes. He continued : “ a similar diagnosis gives the real clue to the impediments of this province ; a humid and malarious atmosphere injurious to the indigenous population, which steadily recedes in numbers, and which is fatal to the immigrants from the drier plains of Behar and Bengal, an atmosphere which is still further poisoned by exhalations from the recently up-turned soil and which carries mysterious and deadly diseases in its train.” In other words the climate of Assam was the cause

of its failure to prosper. Now I cannot say that Assam is exactly a sanitarium and none of us probably go there for the benefit of our health, but although not the healthiest place in the world it by no means deserves to be stigmatised in such terms. The ruddy faces around me are the best refutation of such an argument and I respectfully protest against it. Lord Curzon also said : "you complain of the want of pecuniary assistance from the Government but when I examine the accounts I find that the annual balance is against Assam," and he went so far as to say that the balance was nearly a crore of rupees against the province. In saying that Lord Curzon placed to debit the large expenditure on account of the Assam-Bengal Railway. But the greater part of that enormous expenditure has been incurred in the face of strenuous objections from the local authorities, and the tea interest as a body was not consulted as to the line the Railway should take. The alignment is most unfortunate, crossing the hills as it does at an expense which no Railway could stand. The real reason of its selection was political ; it was a measure of high policy in which local interests received a very small share of consideration. The hill section of the Railway will never be the direct line of communication from Assam to Calcutta which is the capital to which tea planters will always look. The Assam Bengal Railway is calculated to be very beneficial to Sylhet and Cachar and I sincerely trust that it will attract

traffic to those districts to a larger extent than it has done hitherto, but it is a chimæra to suppose that it will exploit the province of Assam as a whole, and it is most unfair to debit to the province the whole of the expenditure on that Railway. Eliminating that expenditure it will be found that there is a large credit balance to the province ; in other words the receipts are very largely in excess of the money spent on the province. Before leaving the question of the finances of Assam I am bound to refer to the calamitous earthquake which occurred a little more than three years ago, on the 12th June 1897. The earthquake was one of the most severe of which there is any historic record, and the cost incurred by the administration in the reconstruction of buildings and roads has not been less than 50 lakhs of rupees. This is an outlay which a poor province like Assam is unable to meet and the assistance given by the Government of India has been rendered in a niggardly spirit. The progress of the whole country has been thrust back. Fortunately the tea industry, taking it altogether, did not suffer much though the loss was considerable in some districts ; but the administration unquestionably has suffered and in consequence I am sorry to say that it has not been in my power to give such active encouragement to the development of the province as I could have wished.

The greatest boon that could be given to the province is improved communications. Much has been done in that direction in the past and

something is still being done. I was very pleased to see reference made in the address presented to Lord Curzon at Dibrugarh by my friend Mr. Alston on behalf of the Dibrugarh tea planters, to the fact that the Assam Railway and Trading Companies' Railway had revolutionised the district of Lukhimpore and opened out a new era of prosperity to that portion of the province. This remark is literally true. Those of you who formerly belonged to the Lukhimpore district and left it at a date before this railway was opened would I think be surprised if you were now to turn to Dibrugarh and travel on the Railway to Margherita and Doomdooma and visit the gardens which now stud the district and see the wonderful effect which has been produced by the opening of this railway. But the great need of Assam is not the construction of Railways on the metre guage. What we really want is the construction of light railways or tramways. One of these tramways is already in existence and is quoted on all hands as a model tramway. Mr. Spring, the Consulting Engineer to the Government of India for guranteed Railways, is an ardent supporter of the development of communications by these means in Assam and elsewhere in India. Mr. Spring is a very competent judge of these matters, and he loses no opportunity of saying that the tramway from Tezpur to Balipara is a model for the whole of India for tramways of that character. The benefit which this tramway has been to the district

can only be appreciated by those who live there. It has opened out magnificent gardens, the proprietors of which had it not been for the railway would have found great difficulty in bringing their produce to market. Not only has it benefited the tea industry to a great extent but it has also benefited the Government for it has led to the extension of general cultivation and in particular to the extension of the cultivation of rice. This extension of rice cultivation is also an incalculable boon to the tea industry for the more the rice fields extend the better it is for tea and the more cheaply can you feed your coolies. The full benefit of the Assam Bengal line will not be felt even in Sylhet and Cachar until a regular net-work of tramways has been constructed connecting it with all parts of these districts. The rainfall all over Assam is so heavy that fair weather roads are useless for a great part of the year and the construction of metalled roads is prohibitive on account of the great expense involved. The system of light railways I wish to see should be connected not only with the main lines but also with the main rivers. I am not one of those who deprecate the enormous services which have been rendered to Assam by the river steam companies. Many of you will remember the time when the journey to Assam was made in country boats and it took weeks and weeks to get to Dibrugurh. The communication by steamer has now been very greatly improved by competition. Competition is an admirable

thing and I would like to see the railway and river steamers both working at a satisfactory profit, as they well might ; but it is necessary for both that feeder tramways should be liberally constructed and the question which arises is how can that be done ? I am satisfied that it can only be done by private capital with a reasonable guarantee either of the Local or of the Imperial Government. This subject was touched on by Lord Curzon in the reply he gave to the address presented to him at Gowhatta and he said he could not understand how it was that the promoters of these companies, if they were so assured of the prospects which they offered, could not raise the capital they wanted without a Government guarantee. That was no doubt a specious argument but I do not hesitate to say with all respect that it is a fallacious one. I see certain gentlemen in this room who are interested in the promotion of light railways and I presume that if you had the money in your own pockets you would not ask the Government to assist you. But it is unreasonable to suppose that private individuals are going to construct light railways. They can only be constructed by appealing to the investing public and that can only be done in London. But the prudent investor will not be satisfied with the statement of this or that firm in Calcutta or of any agent who may represent that firm. He will say : " This may be a very good thing but I find that the Government of India are giving guarantees to the main

line, which at present would give no dividend without that guarantee, and if they refuse to give a guarantee to these feeder lines I can only suppose that they look very doubtfully upon their prospects : I am not going to put my money into a concern which I believe the Government of India consider to be of doubtful validity." This line of argument is I think a reasonable and natural one. Now it is not supposed that these feeder lines are going to prove an El Dorado, but it is expected that they will yield a small dividend and in any case do better in this direction than the parent line which has been constructed on such extravagant principles. It is known that they would benefit the local industries and I know that they would enormously benefit the Government. The interests of the Government and of the tea industry are in this matter identical because as additional land comes under cultivation, the Government obtains more revenue. There are in Assam millions of acres awaiting the axe and the plough, and I am afraid we are likely to wait till the Greek Kalends before they are brought under cultivation. I take a great interest in this subject and have submitted a report to the Government of India on the reclamation and colonization of waste lands. My report has been shelved for the present though I believe that in the long run some measures will be adopted in accordance with the general lines I have laid down, but of this I am convinced that we shall never succeed in the extension of cultivation on

any considerable scale until communications have been improved by means of the construction of light railways.

In drawing my observations to a close I deem it right to allude to the death of one my predecessors in Assam, the last Commissioner and Agent to the Governor-General in the Province who was after his retirement for many years Chairman of the Tea Association in London. General Hopkinson was a very distinguished servant of the Government of India who devoted himself to the advancement of Assam and, though he died in the fulness of years, his death was a loss. And I wish to refer also to the late Dr. Berry White who did more than any other individual to establish this excellent institution of an annual Assam Dinner. Dr. Berry White was devoted to Assam and in his will he left a generous legacy of fifty 'housand Rupees for the establishment of a Medical School at Diburgharh. There were difficulties in the way but I am glad to tell you that they were overcome, and during this month my locum tenens, Mr. Fuller, has had the pleasure of opening this School. I myself laid the foundation stone and watched its building with paternal care. I believe that this Medical School will prove very beneficial to the province, that it will be of great assistance to the tea industry by providing for the local supply of native doctors and that it will fully carry out the intentions of the benevolent donor who was one of the greatest benefactors of Assam that

ever lived. Lastly I will add one word in commemoration of the patriotic attitude of the province in rallying to the cause of Queen and Country and sending Lumsden's Horse to South Africa. Colonel Lumsden has rendered and is rendering the most valuable service to his country. Another gallant officer has been pathetically alluded to this evening by both Colonel Kirwan and Colonel Mac Laughlin and the mention of his name recalls to my mind the recent public dinner at Cachar which was given as a send-off to Colonel Showers and his comrades. The admiration which all the Volunteers of Assam had for Colonel Showers was indeed a thing to have witnessed. When I rose to propose Colonel Showers' health the cheering was so vociferous and so continuous that it was at least ten minutes (A voice "a quarter of an hour at least") before I could get any hearing. I was never before present on an occasion of such extraordinary enthusiasm and I believe it was thoroughly well deserved. Colonel Showers was an exceptional man, straightforward and practical and a born leader of men. What was said of Jim Bludso might with equal truth be said of Colonel Showers :—

A keerless man in his talk was Jim,  
And an awkward hand in a row ;  
But he never flunked, and he never lied,—  
I reckon he never knowed how.

Colonel Showers was a simple-minded Englishman, true and staunch as steel and courageous to the backbone. He was a soldier in his youth and

again become a soldier in his prime and he died, as Colonel Kirwan has told you he would have wished to die, a soldier's death. We are all proud of Colonel Lumsden and of Lumsden's Horse and of Colonel Showers who died at the head of his men in the first battle in which they were engaged.

# SPEECH ON THE ASSAM LABOUR AND EMIGRATION BILL

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL  
OF INDIA ASSEMBLED FOR THE PURPOSE OF  
MAKING LAWS AND REGULATIONS

*8th March 1901.*

MY LORD, I support the Hon'ble Member in charge of the Bill in opposing this amendment of the Hon'ble Mr. Buckingham\* and in doing so, I fear I shall be obliged to trespass on Your Excellency's indulgence in addressing the Council at considerable length upon a question which has excited an unusual degree of interest in Assam and in Calcutta. My excuse is that the responsibility for the proposal to raise the wages of contract labourers on tea estates in Assam rests mainly on my shoulders and that its justification must in some measure depend on the arguments I may be able to adduce in its support.

In the first place I must ask for Your Lordship's permission to advert to the considerations which have made it necessary to fix by law the minimum rate of wages under penal labour contracts, and I must point out that there seems to be the more occasion for doing this as these considerations have been conspicuously ignored in some of the arguments which have been advanced

\* Mr. Buckingham's amendment was to the effect that the minimum statutory wages of tea coolies should not be increased.

against the proposal to raise the minimum rate. Let us therefore clearly understand that the conditions in Assam are not those of the ordinary labour market, where the rates of wages can safely be left to be regulated by the economical laws of supply and demand. The whole of the special legislation regarding labour immigration into Assam is based on the assumption that the conditions of the labour market in Assam tea gardens cannot be regulated by those economical laws. The existence of a penal contract is justified on the same ground. The protection of the labourer is justified on the same ground. The law as it stands, and in an equal degree the law which the Council will be to-day asked to pass, impose on the labourers serving under contract thereunder in the tea districts penal provisions of extreme stringency—to such a point that the coolie who is conveyed to the labour districts under this law ceases legally and practically to be a free man. My Lord, I will not go so far as Sir George Campbell did, who, when the Act of 1873 was under consideration, declared from his place as President of the Council that the coolie was reduced to the position of a slave. I do not wish to use any expression which would cause offence, but I will say that the coolie is compelled to labour to the end of his contract as a man not free or his own master. He is bound down for a term of years not only by penalties under the law, but by physical subjection to his employer, who, on a

labourer attempting to run away, is empowered to seize him and bring him back to work. In a country where the tea plantations are generally far removed from authority that is a tremendous power given to employers over their labour force. I do not deny that it is necessary in the interest of the tea industry to confer this power, but when I say this, I venture to remind the Hon'ble Members of this Council that the recognition of this necessity by a provision in the Statute Book affords sufficient evidence of the length to which the Legislature has deemed it proper to go in order to give something more than mere moral support and encouragement to the industry. It is not too much to say that the material support accorded to the tea industry by the provisions contained in the Labour Law for the enforcement of labour under penal contract is the mainstay of the industry, and it is simply amazing to hear, as we have so often heard in the recent public discussions on the subject of this Bill, that the Government affords no assistance to tea in Assam. It is needless for me to add that the Bill now before the Council in no way ameliorates the condition of the tea labourer in regard to his deprivation of freedom while he is under contract. But my Lord, the legislature has another duty to perform, and, while the Statute law of the country has deprived the labourer of his status as a freeman, it has also always recognised that a corresponding obligation rests upon the Government to compel the employer to provide for the labourer's

wants, to protect him against overwork, to shield him from ill-usage of all kinds and to secure to him a reasonable wage. The law before us therefore provides for all these things. A penal labour law and Government protection to the labourer are correlative terms, and it follows from the peculiar nature of a penal contract that it is absolutely necessary for the protection of the labourers who enter into such a contract to make it by law obligatory upon the employer to pay a reasonable wage for their services.

When we speak of the interests of the tea industry, we are accustomed to mean the interests of the proprietors of tea gardens, of the shareholders of Companies, of the agents in Calcutta and London, and of the employers of labour, and this customary use of the expression is a true indication of the fact that we are too apt, not only in our language but also in our thought and actions, to contemplate the interests of the industry exclusively from the capitalist's point of view. And so it is not surprising to find that in the somewhat stormy agitation which has taken place outside these walls regarding the rate of coolies' wages, the question has been looked at solely from the attitude of the capitalist. When an industry is carried on under normal conditions, when labour is free and wages are regulated by the ordinary laws of supply and demand, a claim for increase of wages, if one is made, is naturally put forward by the labourers themselves. If the claim is resisted, the

labourers have their own remedy for endeavouring to enforce it. Trades-unions and strikes are the means by which the operatives of the West can make their power felt. Eventually a settlement is come to after discussion during which both parties have been heard. The press is catholic enough to ventilate the case on both sides and the sympathies of the public are as often with labour as with capital. But the circumstances now before us are very different. The labourers in Assam are an ignorant and voiceless community, and they have no organ to press their demands ; while, on the other hand, the whole of society and all the newspapers of the British press are pledged to the hilt in the defence of their own interests. The truth is that we are now confronted, in a very singular manner, with the old struggle between capital and labour : there is no need to comment on the energy and ability with which the capitalists are represented in this Council ; but there is no labour member to argue the coolies' cause, and I have therefore felt it peculiarly incumbent upon me, as representative and Head of the Province concerned, to state the case on their behalf as temperately and completely as it is in my power to do.

My Lord, I am not indifferent to the praise or blame of my own countrymen, and on the contrary I attach such value to their good opinion that it is with very painful feelings that I have taken up a position which, for a time at least, has alienated from me their sympathy. I do not wish to vapour

about a sense of duty, but in this Council at least it will be admitted that I am animated by a high sense of responsibility : I am not undertaking a pleasant or agreeable task : I am adding to the obloquy I have already incurred : but I am convinced of the justice of the cause and of the righteousness of the claim I have put forward on behalf of labour, and I apprehend that with the mass of facts, figures and reasoning I shall now lay before the Council I shall have little difficulty in persuading Hon'ble Members to agree with me that the raising of the Assam coolie's wage is a necessity which we are bound to face.

By Act VI (B. C.) of 1865, a minimum monthly rate of wages was first fixed by the legislature. The rate so fixed "after communication with persons who had a thorough acquaintance with the state of the labour-market in the Eastern Districts" and which the Select Committee of that time were "assured by those deeply interested in the cultivation of tea to be an equitable and reasonable minimum rate", was Rs. 5 for male adults and Rs. 4 for females. This is the rate which prevails up to the present time. But the important point connected with the legislation of 1865 to which I invite the attention of the Council, is that the status of the labourer thereunder is that of a monthly labourer receiving a certain wage, which could not under any circumstances be reduced by the employer. It was only by order of the Protector of Immigrants or on conviction before a Magistrate that the

labourer could receive less than the statutory rate. The object of prescribing a fixed wage was thus explained by the Select Committee in its Report on the Bill :—

‘ We think that such minimum rate should be fixed, not so much with reference to the amount of profit which a labourer, leaving his own district to labour for a term of years in one far distant, might reasonably and fairly expect to make, but rather with reference to the great practical difficulty which now exists in ensuring that the labourer really knows what rate of pay it is he is undertaking to contract for. At present he agrees to perform work according to a schedule of tasks, the real practical effect of which agreement neither he nor his employer is in a position to know. It has been found that the result of this is that under such agreement men who thought they were engaged for liberal wages have in fact received less than the wages ruling in the districts from which they were taken. Proceeding on this view of the matter we have fixed the rates mentioned in section 4 which, while interfering as little as possible with the economical law of supply and demand, will save the labourer from the possibility of making in his ignorance a contract which shall be a positive loss to him, even if it does not bring him to the very verge of starvation.’

I have quoted these remarks because they are strictly applicable to the present situation. “ The practical difficulty in ensuring that the labourer

really knows what rate of pay it is he is undertaking to contract for", still remains and it has not been overcome by any subsequent legislation. It was met by the law of 1865, but the law was evaded and ignored. It was found in practice impossible to enforce the payment of a fixed wage, and, as one of my predecessors, Sir Steuart Bayley, reported in 1880:—"The alternative universally adopted and, I may add, universally accepted by the Magistrates, is to have a fixed scale of *hasiris* or tasks, and payment is made, not by the day or hour but by the task." This is the practice to which the legislators of 1865 had objected but which they were powerless to stop. Accordingly by Act I of 1882, which is the present law, the practice was recognised and the payment of monthly wages is prescribed at the rate of Rs 5 and 4 for a completed task, and when such task is not completed, provision is made for the payment of monthly wages calculated at the same rate in proportion to the amount of work actually done.

I hope I have made it quite clear, what the meaning of the legislature was when the present rates of Rs. 5 and 4 were first fixed in 1865, and what these rates have come to mean now. In 1865 the labourer was engaged on a monthly wage of Rs. 5. He might, and no doubt did, in many cases by overtime earn more but he could not earn less than five rupees, and his employer could not, on account of his absence from work, or laziness, reduce his wage below the statutory minimum.

The rate was then what it purported to be, a *minimum* rate. Now, it is not too much to say that, excluding from consideration overtime payments, which are only earned by a certain number of labourers and which existed, though perhaps not to the same extent, under the old system, it is a *maximum* rate, for it is only by performing a full task for every working day in the month, without exception, that five rupees can be earned.

It follows that under the operation of the Act of 1882 the status of the coolie has been practically altered to that of a daily labourer. That Act gave effect to the practice which was allowed to prevail generally—the old law and Government orders notwithstanding—with the tacit consent and approval of Assam District Officers. But the Act in giving legal sanction to this practice could not shake itself free from the old fiction of the monthly minimum, and obscured the effect of the change which it introduced by declaring that five rupees could only be earned by completing as many tasks as there were working days in the month, and by detailing the method of arriving at the number of working days in the month. This arrangement, so unnecessarily complicated and cumbrous, is reproduced in the present Bill, although the same result might have been arrived at in a more direct and intelligible manner by declaring specifically in section 5 the daily wages for each class of labourer. I urged in Select Committee that this change should be made and that a statutory minimum

daily rate should be adopted in place of a monthly rate. I regret that this proposal was not accepted, for it is calculated to meet the difficulty of the Committee of 1865 by ensuring that the labourer shall really know what rate of pay he is going to get. A crucial objection to any system of fixed pay is that it is inevitably attended by much compulsion to work. It is not likely that planters who are required to pay a coolie irrespective of task will allow him to sit idle, and there is a risk of a sick or incapable coolie being bullied to work. The failure of the law of 1865 is not, therefore, a matter for much regret. What is wanted is a law which shall secure to the labourer the wages which he believes he will get when he enters into his contract. The Act of 1882 does not provide for this, and the Bill now before the Council does not provide for it. The labourer does not find, till he gets to his destination and begins to work, that he will not get five rupees a month or five rupees eight annas or six rupees, as the case may be, but he finds that he is paid at these rates according to a daily task, and that, unless he completes a full task every working day in the month, he will not get that wage. I do not hesitate to say that under the present system a tacit deception is practised when the terms of the contract are explained to an intending emigrant. He is induced to believe, and actually believes, that he will get a monthly salary, but he does not get it. My Lord, I endeavoured to persuade my colleagues in the Select

Committee to agree to a daily rate of wage, which the labourer would have readily understood, in place of the monthly rate which he understands only, so far that he is deceived by it ; and I do not cease to deplore that I was unsuccessful in persuading them to adopt this amendment.

I shall now show to the Council that the wages fixed for the labourer under the Act of 1865, even if he worked no overtime whatever, are higher than the average wages, including overtime, advances and sick allowances, actually earned in any of the past seventeen years by labourers under the Act of 1882. It will be wearisome to give the figures but I shall proceed to do so. In the year 1883 a statement, based on Inspection Reports, was first included in the Provincial Annual Immigration Report, giving details of wages earned by Act and non-Act labourers in the various districts of the Province. In 1888 a statement was, in addition, first included in the Report, intended to show the wages earned in each district during the busy or manufacturing and during the slack or non-manufacturing seasons. The accuracy of the figures contained in these statements which are obtained from the employers' accounts is perhaps open to question, and there is reason to believe that the averages returned in recent years are in excess of the wages actually earned. Personally I share in these doubts, but, overstated as they probably are, I am willing to accept the figures as they stand. The following statement shows the average wages

earned throughout the province in each year since 1883, calculated from these two sets of figures :—

*Statement showing Provincial average Wages of Tea-garden Coolies under Act I of 1882.*

YEARS.	AVERAGE WAGES OF ACT COOLIES BASED ON FIGURES OBTAINED DURING INSPECTIONS OF GARDENS.		AVERAGE WAGES OF ACT COOLIES, BEING THE MEAN OF WAGES EARNED DURING THE MANUFACTURING AND NON-MANUFACTURING SEASONS.	
	Men.	Women.	Men.	Women
1	2	3	4	5
1883 ..	4 5 3	3 7 0	..	..
1884 ..	4 7 4	3 9 6	..	..
1885 ..	4 8 8	3 8 5	..	..
1886 ..	4 6 6	3 12 7	..	..
1887 ..	4 8 9	3 9 11	..	..
1888 ..	4 7 5	3 10 0	4 7 11	3 10 3
1889 ..	4 6 5	3 8 2	4 6 6	3 7 4
1890 ..	4 12 1	3 9 1	4 6 11	3 6 9
1891 ..	4 4 9	3 7 2	4 4 1	3 5 11
1892 ..	4 9 10	3 7 11	4 15 4	3 14 0
1893 ..	4 11 2	3 9 10	4 12 6	3 11 4
1894 ..	4 9 9	3 8 5	4 8 11	3 10 3
1895 ..	4 12 3	3 12 1	4 12 0	3 11 6
1896 ..	4 11 5	3 15 5	4 12 2	3 18 6
1897 ..	4 12 5	3 12 5	4 11 0	3 10 10
1898 ..	4 11 2	3 9 6	4 11 7	3 11 3
1899 ..	4 11 2	3 11 3	4 11 7	3 11 3
<b>Average</b> ..	<b>4 9 2</b>	<b>3 9 11</b>	<b>4 10 0</b>	<b>3 10 4</b>

In paragraph 145 of the Special Report of 1890—this is the report to which our particular attention has been drawn by my Hon'ble friend Mr. Buckingham—it was pointed out that the calculation of average wages in the past had been vitiated by the neglect to include such items as advances, overtime, and sick allowances. To correct these errors and to ascertain exactly the average wages earned, returns showing the average wages earned in two months—one in the rains and one in the cold weather—in selected gardens in each subdivision were submitted for inclusion in the report of 1890. The statement will be found in paragraph 146 of the Special Report. I give the Provincial average for Act labourers, which was not struck in the statement ;

	Rs.	As.	P.
Act men   ...   ...   ...   ...   ...	4	3	8
Act women   ...   ...   ...   ...   ...	3	7	5

The returns of which this is the net result were prepared with special care, and may be taken to accurately represent the wages of Act labourers ten years ago. In recent years, advances, overtime and sick allowances are always included in the calculation of average wages, and the return since 1890 are not open to the objections taken in paragraph 145 of the Special Report.

I have quoted these figures with the definite object of showing that the average wages of labourers under Act I of 1882 have never reached what is euphemistically called the statutory

minimum. These labourers draw less salary now than it was intended by the legislature of 1865 that they should receive. I now pass on to establish my next point, which is that there has occurred in recent years in Assam a general rise in the wages of unskilled labour, in which tea garden coolies under penal contracts have not participated.

I have already shown that the Act I labourer is in no sense a monthly but a daily labourer. It seems right, therefore, that, so far as the present question is concerned, regard should be had to daily and not to monthly wages. The two things are by no means the same, and fortunately comparison is facilitated by the fact that in the official returns daily wages are given. The following statement compiled from Provincial Administration Reports show for each district the daily wages of unskilled labourers for the past 26 years :—

*Statement showing Daily Wages of Unskilled Labourers.*



A rough examination of this statement is sufficient to show that a general rise has everywhere taken place, but, to make the figures more intelligible, I give for the Surma Valley which contains less than 10, and the Assam Valley which contains over 90, and for the four Upper Assam Valley districts which contain 90, per cent. of the Act population of the Province, the daily wages in each of the five quinquennial periods between 1874-1875 and 1898-99 :

	1874-75— 1878-79.	1879-80— 1883-84.	1884-85— 1888-89.	1889-90— 1893-94.	1894-95— 1898-99.
1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Averages for—</b>		<b>Rs.</b>	<b>Rs.</b>	<b>Rs.</b>	<b>Rs.</b>
Surma Valley .. ..	4.8	5.8	5.0	5.3	5.7
Assam Valley .. ..	4.1	4.8	5.1	5.6	6.4
Four Upper Assam Valley districts (Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur).	4.3	5.1	5.5	5.8	6.8
All plains districts ..	4.28	5.0	5.06	5.5	6.2

Adopting a useful device used by the Statistical Department, I repeat the last statement, denoting in each case the figure for the first quinquennial period by 100, with a view to illustrate the percentage of fluctuation in each case :

	1874-75— 1878-79.	1879-80— 1883-84.	1884-85— 1888-89.	1889-90— 1893-94.	1894-95— 1898-99.
1	2	3	4	5	6
Surma Valley .. ..	100	120	104	110	118
Assam Valley .. ..	100	117	120	136	156
Four Upper Assam Valley Districts (Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, and Lakhimpur).	100	118	127	134	146
All plains districts ..	100	116	118	128	144

It will be noticed that the general rise in Assam amounts on an average during the past twenty-five years to 44 per cent.

I will now advance to the next step of my argument and show that the present average rate of wages paid to unskilled labour in Assam is more than double that of the wage prescribed by law for Act coolies. The present daily wages of an Act I labourer in a month of 26 working days amounts to three annas a day, and this is the rate at which all *hasiris* in the province are calculated. Denoting this daily rate at 100, I commend the following highly significant table to the consideration of Council :—

Annas.					
Present daily wages of an Act I labourer 100 or 3'0					
Average daily wages of an unskilled la- bourer during the quinquennial period					
1894-95—1898-99 in Cachar . . . 162 5'0					
Ditto	ditto	Sylhet . . .	208	6'4	
Ditto	ditto	Goalpara . . .	149	4'6	
Ditto	ditto	Kamrup . . .	267	8'2	
Ditto	ditto	Darrang . . .	172	5'3	
Ditto	ditto	Nowgong . . .	208	6'4	
Ditto	ditto	Sibsagar . . .	192	5'9	
Ditto	ditto	Lakhimpur . . .	254	7'8	
Ditto	ditto	Surma Valley .	185	5'7	
Ditto	ditto	Assam Valley .	208	6'4	
Ditto	ditto	four Upper Assam Valley districts	205	6'3	
Ditto	ditto	all plains districts	201	6'2	

The average daily wage of an Act. I labourer who does full tasks is three annas, the avarage daily wage of an unskilled labourer in Assam is a little over six annas or more than twice as much. These are the facts. They speak for themselves, and comment on them is superfluous.

It is, indeed, obvious that the minimum statutary wage should not be lower than the average wage current for ordinary unskilled labour in the district in which the contracting labourer is to serve, due allowance being made for any additional expenditure imposed by law on the employer, which can properly be included in wages. I cannot admit that the cost of the medical and sanitary arrangements, which the Legislature requires to be provided for large bodies of coolies living in an unhealthy climate, should be included in wages. But such items of expense as the cost of free coolie lines and the cost of medicines and subsistence money or diet given to sick coolies may properly be included. When, however, these items are taken into account, they will in no way compensate the contract labourers for the fact that the rate of wages they receive is less than half the current market rate.

I will now allude to the cost of living in Assam and show that it has increased, notwithstanding the assertion of my Honourable friends to the contrary. They have not been able to furnish any authoritative figures on the subject, and I am not careful to disprove or dispute the statement that

calicos and salt and probably tobacco and pepper are cheaper in 1899 than they were in 1882. I have had some difficulty in getting figures myself, and the only official statistics I have been able to procure in regard to the price of staples are those which refer to cleaned rice in ordinary use, to pulses in ordinary use and to wheat. A reference to the Bengal Administration Report of 1871-72, a year of normal prices, shows that the average price of rice in Assam was then 22 seers a rupee, of pulses 20 seers, and of wheat 20 seers. The average price now is approximately 12 seers for rice, 12 seers for pulses and 10 seers for wheat. It is true that employers are bound to supply rice to their Act labourers at the rate of three rupees a maund which comes to about  $13\frac{1}{4}$  seers for a rupee, but the fact remains that in regard to these main staples of food the price has greatly risen. When the minimum was first fixed in 1865, it was the rule for employers to bind themselves to supply rice to their coolies at the rate of one rupee a maund. This was gradually relaxed to two rupees and then to two rupees eight annas, and it was in Sir George Campbell's time that the three-rupee rate was established. In any case, it is incorrect to say that coolies under contract are not affected by fluctuations in the price of rice. The prescribed rate of Rs. 3 a maund is the maximum price at which employers are bound to supply rice when the market price rises above that limit, but in most of the tea districts it has until recently been below

Rs. 3 a maund and coolies are left to make their own arrangements for their supply. It is in the Dibrugarh gardens only that the price of rice to the coolies has practically remained constant at Rs. 3 a maund. But it is among the Dibrugarh gardens, as I have ascertained by personal enquiry that the objection of the employers to raising the rate of wages is comparatively slight. The rate of six rupees a month has already in the most important gardens of that district been accorded to the labourers employed therein.

The rates of wages on Assam tea gardens are sometimes compared with the rates current in the districts from which the tea coolies are recruited ; but this is not a fair comparison. Although wages may be low in the country of recruitment, they are not low in the vast field for labour in the vicinity thereof. Coolies from Chota Nagpur, Behar and the North-West and Central Provinces migrate in large numbers for work to Eastern Bengal, to Calcutta, and the districts near it, and look to these places for employment as much as to their native districts. They are in demand in the coal mines of Raniganj, the jute factories around Calcutta and at Narainganj, and the tea gardens of the Duars, and it is not to be expected that they will willingly emigrate to Assam under a penal contract at a lower rate of wages than they can obtain by free labour so much nearer their homes. It is a truism applicable to all classes of workers in all parts of the world—as much to the Hon'ble Members of

this Council as to tea coolies—that they will expect a higher rate of wages far from home than when employed in or near to their own country.

Upon the subject of wages earned at coal mines in Bengal I cannot do better than quote paragraph 44 of the report of the Labour Enquiry Commission of 1896. The Commission wrote :—

“From the experience already gained, there is but little doubt that on good mines a hard worker should earn his 8 to 10 annas a day cutting coal, and so far the average has been above that. At Gaurangdi 12 annas a day were being earned when the President visited the place. On some mines these amounts cannot be earned, but even on them a North-Western Provinces miner can earn three times the amount he would be able to get in his own country ; and when the supply of labourers is at present less than the demand, miners will not stay unless they get good pay. What amount a coal-carrier would be able to earn it is difficult to say, and North-Western Provinces people are hardly likely to carry coal except as members of a gang, when they would of course share with the coal cutters. Where coal carriers are engaged separately, they generally earn from 3 to 6 annas a day.”

From the statement furnished by the Jute Association, which is given in paragraph 101 of this Report, it appears that for “general coolies” work at jute mills the minimum rate of wages is Rs. 5 a month and the maximum Rs. 9 a month.

For different kinds of work suitable for women the rates vary from Rs. 4-8 to Rs. 9 a month. The statement in Appendix O to this Report, which is the only detailed information I can find, shows that wages at the Shamnagar Jute Mill which employs more than five thousand workmen, are higher than the above, the rates for "general coolies" ranging from Rs. 6-8 to Rs. 9 a month. In Calcutta the wages of labour are usually paid at a daily rate which is certainly not less than four annas a day, and jungly coolies such as those required for Assam are, when engaged on a monthly salary, paid at not less than 9 rupees a month. With regard to the Duars tea gardens, full information is supplied in the letter from the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Forrest, dated 21st August 1900, which is among the papers laid by the Bengal Government before the Council. He writes, "the monthly rate for men's work (which is practically entirely confined to hoeing and pruning) is the same all over the district, *viz.*, Rs. 6 for a man who performs his *hasin* every day in the month except Sunday." The rate for women, he explains, varies from Rs. 4 to Rs. 5. He adds that the supply of efficient labour is at present not equal to the demand, and that although theoretically this state of things should lead to a gradual rise in wages, the fact that it has not yet done so, is due to the imperfect mobility of cooly labour, to combination among managers who are controlled by superintendents in charge of large concerns who

regulate tasks and wages according to a uniform principle, and, lastly, to the all-powerful influence of custom. "It is the *dustoor*," he writes, "to pay Rs. 6 per month for a *haziri*, and the coolie accepts this as fair pay for his daily labour and is content." In addition to this salary the coolies enjoy all the miscellaneous additional advantages which are allowed to a tea coolie in Assam. Mr. Forrest writes, "a coolie's minimum requirements are a good thatched house, free medicine, a fairly abundant supply of water, a sufficiency of fuel and a market close at hand ; and he will not go to a garden where any of them are not complied with." He does not get rice at three rupees a maund, but rice is cheaper in Jalpaiguri than in the Assam Valley, and coolies are able to procure rice without the intervention of the planter at a lower price than three rupees a maund.

My Lord, these are the wages which a jungly coolie is able to command in Bengal without the paralysing condition of a penal contract in a distant province for a term of years. The contract labourer who is expected to serve for five rupees a month as an *adscriptus glebae* is able to earn from six to ten rupees a month in service as a free man much nearer to his home. I should be justified in declaring that for this reason alone the minimum rate of wage prescribed by the present law should be raised. But I can go further. This minimum rate has never been sufficient to procure suitable labour for the Assam tea districts. So long ago as the

27th December 1868 the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir William Grey, wrote :—“The simple fact is that the wages \* \* \* are not sufficient to induce people who are in good circumstances to run the risks of emigration in order to secure them. It is perfectly clear that the wages paid will not tempt in ordinary years and for a continuance anything like first class labourers. What was true more than thirty years ago is now more true than ever. I have long since found it impossible to avoid the conclusion that the inadequate rate of wages offered is the principal, if indeed it is not the sole, cause of the difficulty of obtaining labour which has resulted in such a keen competition for labourers and in the enormous premia paid to labour contractors. Coolies of good physique and constitution willing to emigrate to Assam under a penal contract, are not to be obtained in the labour market at the present rates, and to meet the demand, contractors are compelled to search far and wide for people who are in such a state of destitution that they are prepared to emigrate on any terms as a last resource. Men and women who owing to bad health or idle dissolute habits have failed to make a living in their native districts, beggars collected in towns of Behar and the Central and the North-western Provinces, are swept together and sent up to the tea gardens of Assam, where for a year or two at least they will not do a full day's work but will only be an expense and burthen to their employers and swell the returns of sickness and mortality. The

recruiter or *arkati* lies in wait for wives who have quarrelled with their husbands, young people who have left their homes in search of adventure, insolvent peasants escaping from their creditors. In carrying on his business he has to display considerable activity and resource ; he has to incur unpopularity and even physical danger ; he must bribe chowkidars, police underlings and zamindary servants. Occasionally he brings himself within the meshes of the criminal law. When unsuitable coolies are recruited their names and castes are changed before they are sent up to the labour districts ; and if his frauds are discovered or any irregularity in the recruitment is brought to light, the contractor is liable to have the coolies returned on his hands. It is not surprising that for such difficult and risky work the contractor demands a high rate of remuneration which the keen demand for labour enables him to obtain.

There is indeed a regularly established business of " buying and selling " labour, and employers now pay for every labourer recruited under penal contract a sum varying from Rs. 120 to 150, whereas a quarter of a century ago they paid for the same class of coolie about Rs. 50 or 60. The difference in price, or on an average about Rs. 80 for a coolie, represents the increased cost now incurred by the tea industry in procuring labour. The average number of Act I labourers imported by contractors into Assam during the five years from 1895 to 1899 inclusive is 16,093, and at a cost of

Rs. 80 per head the average annual net increased loss to the industry during this period has been nearly 13 lakhs of rupees. This money has filled the pockets of an army of middlemen ; agents, contractors, *duffadars* and *arkatis*. It is money which would not have been spent if the rate of wages offered were as sufficient to secure suitable labour as it was twenty-five years ago. The rate was notoriously insufficient then, and it is by the measure of this difference the more insufficient now. The total annual loss incurred by the tea industry on account of these buying and selling transactions which are so objectionable on other grounds, can not be estimated at less than 16 lakhs of rupees.

These transactions are a great curse to the recruiting districts. In too many instances the subordinate recruiting agents resort to criminal means, inducing their victims by misrepresentation or by threats to accompany them to a contractor's depot or railway station where they are spirited away before their absence has been noticed by their friends or relations. The records of the Criminal Courts teem with instances of fraud, abduction of married women and young persons, wrongful confinement, intimidation, and actual violence—in fact a tale of crime and outrage which would arouse a storm of public indignation in any civilized country. In India the facts are left to be recorded without notice by a few officials and missionaries. I would refer those who are curious in this matter to the reports of my late lamented friend,

Mr. Grimley, who was for six years Commissioner of Chota Nagpur, and to the note of the Reverend Father Hoffman, which was submitted to his Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in 1899.

Upon the tea industry of Assam the effects of the system are, if possible even more disastrous. They are seen in the appalling rate of mortality among contract labourers, which is due to the importation of unsuitable labour and to insufficient feeding, the result of inadequate wages ; in the frequent desertions ; in the wretched worn out and diseased coolies who find a miserable end in the public hospitals or by the wayside. The importation of a bad and even of the worst class of labour has always been a great practical difficulty with the tea industry and it augments year by year. It is the principal cause of the excessive mortality among Act labourers in Assam, which during the past thirteen years from 1887 to 1899, inclusive, has averaged 53·2 per thousand. It must be remembered that this is the mortality among adults in the prime of life. It amounts to what would be considered a very heavy mortality if all ages were included. It is at least twice as much as it would be if the rate of wages were sufficient to enable the employers to reject all but healthy labourers. I have examined the rate of mortality during the year 1899 for the whole province of Assam among persons from 15 to 40 years of age, and find that it amounts as nearly as possible to 24 per thousand. The rate of mortality among Act coolies is

therefore quite double that of the mortality among the general population. The total average mortality among Act labourers in the Province during these thirteen years has been 6,175. If half of these could have been maintained alive, an annual saving at the estimated rate of Rs. 130 per head, amounting to Rs. 4,01,310, would have been effected. Apart from all considerations of humanity the industry is thus a heavy loser from paying wages on a scale which is insufficient to attract strong and healthy labourers.

My Lord ! This is the real canker that is eating at the vitals of the tea industry. One of the most important principles of the present Bill is to encourage sardari recruiting and to discourage recruiting through contractors. This is a most sound principle, and it meets with my hearty concurrence. It means that recruiters should be labourers employed on the estate, who are sent down by their employers to their own country to recruit among their own people and near their own homes where they are known, who are understood and trusted by those among whom they operate, and who are able to explain fully to them the circumstances and conditions of labour on the garden from which they come. Such men are able to certify that the garden is a healthy one, that the coolies are well treated, that their tasks are light, and that they can easily earn overtime money in addition to the legal wages under their contracts. This would indeed be an ideal state of things, and

if all recruiting were carried on in this way there would be little or no necessity for special legislation. But unfortunately recruiting is not, and cannot, so long as the present rates of wages continue, be carried on in this way. It is only in years of scarcity in the recruiting districts that even well-managed gardens are able to recruit coolies of a good class through garden sardars at present rates, and it is only a very small number of employers who are able to recruit all the coolies they require through garden sardars. The late Mr. Huttman who was for thirty years or more the Superintendent of the important Jorhat Tea Company wrote in 1890 : "Now-a-days we have to send away 100 sardars for 300 or 400 coolies required. Formerly we calculated on getting 15 to 20 coolies for each sardar." When Mr. Huttman was a young man, the rate of wages was more adequate than it is now, and sardars were able to return from the recruiting districts with 15 or 20 men apiece. Those halcyon days, alas ! are gone. In 1890 garden sardars were able on an average to bring only four or five recruits apiece. But since then things have gone from bad to worse and I find from the last report which has been submitted to Your Excellency's Government that in 1899 the average number of recruits per sardar amounted to only 1.4. How often have I not seen for myself on the river steamers sardars returning to their employers empty handed ! "Why have you not brought

recruits?" I ask. "What could I do, Sahib?" is the reply, "the harvest is good and no one will come." It is the old story that the wages are insufficient. During the year 1899, 5,411 garden sardars were sent from Assam into the recruiting districts and they brought back with them only 7,571 coolies. The number of contractors' coolies imported in the same year was also below the average, but it amounted to 11,065. The official explanation is: "this was due not to a decreased demand for labour, but to the difficulty of obtaining coolies during a year of plenty in the recruiting districts." In other words, the wages offered were insufficient to attract recruits. During the past year the influence of famine had made itself felt, and a great stimulus has been offered to recruiting. But even so the supply of labour has not been equal to the demand for it, and the Hon'ble Members who represent the tea industry on this Council, are if possible, even more alive than I am myself, to the fact that there is a grave deficiency in the supply of labour to the province. My Lord! It is generally unwise to venture on prophecy, but I do not think I am betraying myself in a moment of indiscretion when I say from my seat in this Council that the well-considered and well-intentioned provisions of the Bill before us are not calculated to facilitate the importation of labour into Assam. That has been our object, but it will not be attained until a reasonable market rate of wage is offered to Assam coolies. Until that is

done, and our present Bill does not do it, sardari recruiting will be no more successful in the future, except during a famine year, than it has been in the past, and it will always be necessary to buy coolies, the very scum and riff raff of the labour market, at an extravagant and, I fear, increasing price which, with such difficult and risky work as the crimping of labour involves, will always be demanded by the contractor. No one knows this better than the employers themselves ; and there was remarkable evidence to this effect in the speeches of Messrs. Ashton and Hart at the recent special meeting of the Tea Association on the 22nd of February, when it was urged that this Bill would not reduce the cost of importing coolies and that the planters would still have to bribe recruiters and police officers and village chowkidars to obtain recruits.

The question may be asked, why it is that, if the market rate of wages and the demand for labourers have increased, the wages of tea garden coolies have not also increased, and why it is that the rates of premium paid to contractors have enormously increased instead. Now I have already been told, as is perhaps natural enough, that the planters know their own interest better than I do, and that it is their own look-out if they prefer to pay their money to middlemen rather than to their coolies, and to lose their labourers by death and sickness and desertion rather than pay wages which will secure the service of healthy

and contented employés. But when the issue is set up in this form, it is impossible for the Government to look on with unconcern, and I cannot forget that one of the highest duties imposed upon me as Head of the Administration is to protect against their employers these very labourers who are entrusted into their hands with all the rigours of a penal contract for a term of years. I altogether repudiate the contention that the rate of wages is no concern of mine. I am aware, however, that the ordinary principles of political economy have very little application to the question, and that the real answer is to be found in the peculiar conditions of the tea industry. Wages in Assam tea gardens, having been fixed at the outset at the minimum statutory rates, which were then comparatively high rates, have been kept from increasing by concerted action among employers. I think it may be said that in all avenues of business employers combine as much as they can to keep down wages : that is one of the normal points of antagonism between capital and labour ; but in the Assam tea industry such combination is exceptionally strong and effective, not only because the labourers are very ignorant and helpless, but also because, being bound by a penal contract, they are unable, as operatives are elsewhere, to strike for an increase of wages. If they were to strike they would be sent to prison. On the other hand, a rise of wages has not yet been forced on employers by the impossibility of obtaining labourers at the old rates. Contractors

still continue to supply labour at those rates but they do so with increasing difficulty and risk for which they are compensated by a rise in the price of coolies, while, at the same time, the quality of the labour has perceptibly diminished. The question how much longer contractors will be able to supply coolies at the old rate of wages is another matter, but it is evident that there must be a limit beyond which employers cannot allow the price of coolies to rise and a limit below which they cannot allow deterioration to fall. The legislature has now stepped in and is proposing some amelioration in the rate of wages. In my opinion we are not going far enough, but we are at least preparing an unwilling industry for a further increase in the rate which, in a short time, will become inevitable.

I have often heard it said, but I regard it as a mere utterance of despair, that an increase in the rate of wages will not improve the quality of labour. That it will do so I conceive to be a truism which admits of no serious discussion ; and I presume that the same argument which is held to be applicable to the highest officers of State—the argument which was brought forward by the Chamber of Commerce for increasing the salaries of the Judges of the High Court of Judicature for instance—will equally apply to the raising of the wages of labour in the humblest sphere of life.

My Lord ! I wrote in my note on clause 5 of the Bill, which, with Your Excellency's permission, has been annexed to the Report of the Select

Committee, that I was expressing myself with studious moderation when I said that I believed that one of the causes of the heavy mortality among Act coolies was that they did not always receive a living wage. To that remark the strongest exception has been taken, and I have been severely criticised for making it; but I did not write those words without a due sense of responsibility, and I shall now proceed to prove them to the letter. It is not an uncommon experience of Inspectors to report regarding tea-gardens where the coolies have an underfed and anaemic appearance, where the death-rate is high, and where desertions are numerous, indicating discontent among the labour force, that the chief cause for this unsatisfactory state of things is the insufficiency of wages. In tea, as in every other great industry, there are a number of concerns which, owing to one cause or another are not prosperous and which are carried on with difficulty, yielding little or no profit; and in such cases there is the strongest temptation to the manager to effect a short-sighted economy by increasing tasks and cutting down wages. I am not careful to ransack the records of the Assam Secretariat to obtain evidence of bad cases, but I think I shall not be deemed to have adopted an ungenerous or unreasonable course if I fall back on proof in support of my statement from cases which have come to my official notice during my present stay in Calcutta as a member of Your Lordship's Council. I will not mention names or

places but will refer only to districts from which the cases are reported.

My first case comes from Cachar. The Magistrate reports that the Act I wages returned from January to June, last year, are "absurdly low," especially those for women in June, *viz.*, Rs. 1-12-3 only. He found that one woman who turned out to work every day in June earned only Rs. 2-1-3, while in no case was a higher wage than Rs. 2-10-0 earned in that month. The highest wages earned by Act coolies during the year were in September, when Rs. 3-6-9 were earned by the men and Rs. 3-6-7 by the women. It is stated that those low wages were not due to the coolies being new to the work, inasmuch as they had all of them been on the garden over two years. The Magistrate adds, "after careful enquiry I do not think it would be fair to the garden to reduce the schedule of work which is not at all an excessive one," and it is said that non-Act coolies on this garden are drawing fair wages on the same tasks. The only explanation of this state of things is that "Act I coolies are of a most inferior stamp, mostly from the Central Provinces."

My next case is from the Dibrughar district. Here the Civil Surgeon had been out to inspect an unhealthy garden—this means a garden in which the mortality had exceeded 7 per cent—and he reports that sixty or seventy per cent. of the force were anaemic and weedy, and that, in concert with the Civil Medical Officer employed on behalf of

the tea-garden, he had repatriated 45 labourer then and there. The cause of this was bad recruitment. He writes, "I found Telis, Napits, Halwais Muhummadans and others sent up as Gonds." He reports also that there were many illegal advances debited against coolies and deducted from their wages, "including 12 cases in which rewards were paid for deserters recovered." This is an illegal practice. When labourers desert, their employers naturally adopt every means to recover them and are in the habit of paying five rupees or more to the garden chowkidar, to the ferryman who may intercept them, or to any one who may bring them back. There is no impropriety in this but it has become an outrageous custom to debit this reward as an advance against the recovered labourer and to deduct it from his wages until the amount is paid.

I come now to the Sibsagar District. The Civil Surgeon in this case had gone out to inspect an unhealthy garden where the mortality had varied for two or three years from 132 to 65 per thousand. I quote his remarks in full, for they are worth quoting. He writes:—

"Heavy mortality seemed to have been due to inferior coolies having been sent up when first class coolies were ordered. I am informed by the manager that many of these coolies were actually taken from Calcutta slums. I actually found a few natives of Howrah amongst them. Efficient coolies can never be made from such people, especially

in a newly-opened garden. There was better recruitment later on, and the coolies who are now on the garden may almost be described as survivals of the fittest. The manager has evidently tried his best in the matter of procuring suitable coolies: on one occasion he had to send back, *i. e.* refuse to take delivery of, a whole batch of 22 adults who were unfit for any class of garden-labour. The coolies in the garden, such as they are, are taken good care of &c., &c."

No case could afford clearer evidence than this, of the insufficiency of the present statutory rate of wages to attract suitable labourers, and of the terrible mortality which results among the half-starved refuse of the labour population who are sent up in their place.

I turn to Tezpur case. I received some time ago a pathetic petition which purported to come from the coolies of a tea estate, who declared that they "had executed contracts under the impression that they were serving the Maharani," and made a complaint of continuous gross and systematic ill-usage on the part of the proprietor who was also manager of the garden. It has now been officially ascertained that the deaths occurring on the estate were systematically unreported—being entered as desertions—and, in spite of this, the recorded death rate among all coolies for 1899 was 207 per thousand, and for 1900 it was 112 per thousand. I am afraid that the facts of the complaint are substantially true, and that the whole case illustrates

the deplorable results of the power which the Act gives to an unscrupulous manager over his coolies. The culprit in this case has left Tezpur, but the management of the estate is, I fear, still open to exception, and this is another gross case of under-payment of labour force, oppression and consequent mortality among tea coolies.

I come back to another Sibsagur case in which the Civil Surgeon is again reporting on an unhealthy garden. It is a peculiarly instructive case, for it illustrates the manner in which coolies' wages are cut and the labourers are brought down to starvation point. The Civil Surgeon writes :—

“ Out of 95 Act women 74 actually owe the garden from Rs. 33 to smaller sums, or on an average of well over 10 rupees each for the whole female Act force. The amount owing by the women comes to Rs. 1,036. Out of 35 Act men 19 owe the garden Rs. 155 between them, or on an average of Rs. 4-8 each for the whole number. These advances have been carried on from month to month, from periods which could not be traced : had it been only a few people owing money, the matter could possibly be got at, but 78 per cent. of the women and 54 per cent. of the men owe various amounts.

“ The way these advances accumulated was during periods of sickness. No half haziris, or subsistence allowances, were credited or given, and the coolies were practically charged for the food they consumed while sick. This of course was

exceedingly irregular, but I am glad to state that this has not occurred during the present management.

"Another item I noticed which I consider irregular if not quite illegal. If a cooly absconds and is brought back by the garden chowkidar a sum of Rs. 5 is debited against the absconder as a cash advance and is paid to the person who brings him back."

Of course the practice is illegal, but, as I have said before, I have reason to believe that it is a common one. It appears there had been 25 desertions from this garden during the year up to the Civil Surgeon's inspection on the 30th of November.

I come now to what is probably the worst of the cases which have been lately before me, and I must say that it is an unusually bad case. It comes also from the Sibsagar district. The Deputy Commissioner made an inspection on the 28th of July last, when he reported as follows :—

"The price of feeding sick coolies varies from Rs. 2-4 to Rs. 3 a month, which is put down as an advance against the coolies and deducted from his pay. This is the usual system on gardens, but in a well managed garden the manager always sees that a coolie unable to cover his expenses at the hotel by his work gets a certain amount of money paid him at the end of the month for petty luxuries etc. Here, however, this is not done, and I found cases where coolies had not received any money for some months. The result is that they are

absolutely beggared and cannot buy clothes, oil, etc., and they go from bad to worse. When a coolie gets very bad, and there is little chance of getting any work out of him, he is "discharged by mutual consent." This, the manager explained, means that he is told that he must either work or clear out. Being *ex hypothesi* unable to work, he clears out. I met some of these people ; they were absolutely destitute, but did not want to go back."

The Deputy Commissioner then cites special cases, of which I give an abstract. One Joharu was debited with Rs. 8-1 as the cost of feeding at the hotel for three months, during which he earned only nominal wages, not a pice of which was paid to him, and he was then "discharged by mutual consent." One Kanhai was debited with Rs. 10-12-6, and one Dulan with Rs. 17-16-3, and both were eventually discharged in the same way without receiving any wages. One Somer was debited with Rs. 15-2, made up of advances for food, and of a sum of five rupees reward to a person who caught him when absconding. No money was paid to him for four months. Upon receipt of this Report I ordered a Committee to enquire into the condition of the garden. That Committee sat on the 31st December last, and I will read the following extract from their Report :—

" The condition of affairs on the garden is in the opinion of both the Deputy Commissioner and Civil Surgeon, disgraceful. The average wages for the best part of this year work out to a little

over half the statutory rate. Many of the coolies were in rags. From the nature of the work, which is principally hoeing—at the best of times severe labour—coolies, especially women, would have to work very hard to earn a full *haziri*, and a glance at the *haziri* books will shew that it seems almost impossible for a great number of men and women to be able to earn anything like a full day's pay. The number of fractional *haziris* far exceeds the full ones. The Committee do not purpose quoting individual cases in the matter of wages, as they would have, in all probability, to quote such a large number. For this reason the *haziri* books are sent and cases which are noteworthy are marked with a blue pencil."

I regret that this *hiziri* book or labour register did not reach me until after the deliberations of the Select Committee on the subject of coolies' wages had closed. But I have now brought this book to Council with me—it lies on the table and is open to inspection—and with Your Excellency's permission I will indulge in a running commentary on its contents. I begin with the month of June 1899, when I find that the Civil Surgeon observes: "From this month it may be noticed that a system of quarter *haziris* seems to have been started." This means that because the manager decides that only a quarter task has been done, only a quarter of a full day's salary is to be paid. For a quarter *hazari*, therefore, a coolie draws a daily salary of three pice only. Talk of a living wage, indeed !

I trust for the honour of the industry that this is not a common practice in tea gardens, but I cannot say that it is absolutely illegal, and Hon'ble Members can see for themselves how it is applied in one garden in Assam. The Civil Surgeon writes of this month, "Not a single woman on this page has earned a full month's pay" and on the next two pages: "Not a single full month's pay earned." For July he points out that "fractional haziris preponderate in this month," and that not a single full wage has been earned by men and only one by a woman. During this month I detect no less than 5 cases in which 5 rupees have been debited as an advance against deserters who had been recovered. For August the Civil Surgeon draws attention to the number of sick cases who are not credited, as they should have been, with sick or half haziris. There is not a single full wage earned and I find 4 cases in which deserters have been debited with an advance of 5 rupees. I note that pregnant women are allowed nothing when absent from their work. In September I note that the Civil Surgeon, whose honest indignation is rising as he goes on comments against the name of an unfortunate wretch who is entered as "dead," who had received no wages and had a large advance debited against him on account of his subsistence while sick,—"Better off." Aye! Better off indeed! Better dead than slowly dying of starvation! There are only two full wages earned this month, and I am mistaken if these were

not earned by the syces of the manager. There are three sick coolies entered as absconded against whom the Civil Surgeon enters large queries, and he implies that they are dead, but have been entered as absconded—in the way we saw followed in the Tezpur case—to reduce the rate of mortality. There are apparently six recovered deserters against whom 5 rupees advance has been debited in each case. In October there are no full wages earned by coolies employed on the garden, but I find that among the coolies a full haziri was earned by a dâkwallah, a syce and a cook. There are two miserable sick coolies this month who are "discharged" that is to say, as the Civil Surgeon bluntly puts it, "turned out to die." There are 9 cases in which 5, 6 or 7, rupees, as the case may be, are entered as an advance against a recovered absconder. In November the only coolies who earned full pay are a dâkwallah, a herdman and a cook. One sick coolie is discharged, or "turned out to die;" in seven cases 5 rupees are entered as an advance against a recovered absconder. In December there is another sick coolie discharged "to die on the road," and no coolies, except servants earned a full month's pay. In January some full months' wages were earned, but no body got as much as five rupees, as old advances on account of deserting and feeding were cut from wages. There were six more deserters with the usual advance of five rupees against them this month. And so the sickening tale goes on. My

Lord ! I have said enough. Have I not proved my assertion to the letter ? Do I not well to be angry ? I confess that my blood boils at this recitation of misery and wrong, and I shall be surprised if I do not carry with me the sympathies and have not roused also the indignation of Your Lordship and of the Hon'ble Members of this Council.

I do not wish it to be understood that these are ordinary cases. I trust and believe that they are very exceptional cases, and I should be conveying a very false impression to this Council if I did not state distinctly that in the majority of tea gardens in Assam, the coolies are well cared for and that the managers of gardens are ordinarily humane and kindly hearted gentlemen. All the gardens I have personally visited in Assam are of this type. But reports on bad gardens are submitted to me in the course of business, and it is with reference to the standard prevailing on bad gardens that our legislation has to be framed. It is duty of the Government and of the Council to remember this in deciding upon the character of the legislation we are bound to follow.

I observe that the objection taken by the majority of the Select Committee to the increase in the rate of wages proposed in the Bill originally introduced into this Council is that, if it were adopted, it would impose an excessive burden on employers. Now I do not deny that it would impose some burden. But it was never contemplated, when minimum

rates were first imposed, that they should be fixed for ever, and I have certainly failed in my endeavours to convince the Council if I have not shewn that a heavy weight of moral responsibility will rest upon the Legislature if it does not intervene to remedy the crying evils I have described. Those evils, which are simply strangling the tea-industry, all hinge upon the question of the insufficiency of wage. I admit, and no one can be more sorry than I am, that in other directions the industry has fallen upon evil times. The present tea crisis, as it is called, is attributed to over-production. Now it is true that there has been, and still is, over-production. Tea planters everywhere are suffering from this cause, and the fall in the price of tea is a very serious matter to proprietors and shareholders. It is probably not so serious as the fall in prices would seem to indicate. Profits can be made at prices which a few years ago would have been deemed impossible, and I am afraid that the extension of cultivation is not likely to cease in places where tea can be produced at a cost of less than two annas a pound and the outturn is about twelve or fourteen maunds per acre. The dividends of good gardens have, no doubt, greatly diminished, but it can hardly have been expected that they would keep up to a level of 20 or 25 per cent. These large profits of a few years ago are one of the principal causes which have led to over-production. New gardens have been overcapitalised and must work at a loss. In

many cases however, the present crisis is not to be compared to the crisis in the sixties which was due to speculation. The industry recovered from that blow, and it will recover from over-production also, as other industries have done which have been stricken by the same cause. The crisis from over-production will pass away as new markets are opened out and the supply learns to adapt itself to the demand. There is nothing to interfere with the operation of the laws of political economy or to deny them their free scope in this direction. I could wish indeed that this crisis were not synchronous with the growth to a climax of the far more deeply-seated and dangerous evils on which I have dilated and which have their poisonous root in the heart of the industry. But these evils have been growing up for a long time, and nothing will remedy them but an increase in the wages of labour. It is certain that there are some tea concerns which, owing either to mismanagement, or the inferior productive capacity of their estates, or undue inflation of their capital by speculation, are unable to earn a dividend for their shareholders by legitimate means and eke out a precarious existence by exacting from their labourers the maximum of toil for the minimum of wage at the cost of untold misery, suffering and loss of life. To such moribund undertakings an increase of the minimum rate of wages might give the *cup de grace*. But there can be little doubt that the effect of such a measure upon

the majority of tea estates which rest upon a sounder basis will be to meet the increase of wage by a corresponding saving from the excessive burdens which are now placed on employers ; such as the heavy cost of purchasing coolies and the heavy cost of avoidable mortality, which are directly due to the payment of an inadequate wage. I repeat, moreover, as I have said all along, that there is no reason why, with a suitable adjustment of tasks, the increase of wages should involve any increase of expenditure in the majority of gardens where the coolies are now well treated and contented. I do not anticipate that there would be any practical change in the condition of the labour force on gardens where the tasks are at present light and the wages, including overtime payments, are already sufficient. The proposed increase in the statutory minimum rate of wages is not likely to produce any effect upon the first-class labourers who make and will continue to make large profits from overtime work, and it would not in itself, unless accompanied by the reduction in the rate of tasks which the Bill now before the Council enjoins, produce any effect on newly-arrived coolies who are unable to do a full day's work, but it will immensely benefit the great mass of labourers who are content to, and can, perform the present task and will, therefore, get through a slightly augmented task in return for higher wages, but will, as they do now, get little or nothing from overtime. I have been told that the raising of task rates in

proportion to the increase in wages would be a matter of difficulty, that it would cause inconvenience and not be understood by the coolies, and that it would upset the labour force and cause discontent. To this I reply, that all industries must expect to be liable to some occasional disturbance in respect of wages, but that, although some inconvenience will no doubt be caused by an alteration of task rates, there is no reason to suppose that it would be serious. Task rates are not uniformly or rigidly laid down. They vary from garden to garden and from time to time, in some cases from day to day and from one part of a garden to another, under conditions and circumstances which are constantly changing. There is an elasticity in the system which lends itself to a modification in the rates with the minimum of disturbance.

My Lord ! I have now done. I have stated my case with a degree of elaboration which I am afraid has fatigued the Council. I thank Your Lordship and Hon'ble Members for the patience with which you have heard me. I regret that the increase in the rate of wages, which was proposed in the Bill as introduced before the Council, has been withdrawn, but I trust and am confident that the amendment of my Hon'ble friend opposite, which does not accept even the modified increase contained in the Bill now presented by the Select Committee, will be rejected by a decisive majority.

SPEECH AT A FAREWELL DINNER  
GIVEN BY THE RESIDENTS OF SHILLONG.

*April 28th 1902.*

SIR JOHN REID, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I thank you most gratefully for the kind manner in which Mr. Porteous has proposed our health and the warm reception you have given to the toast. It is now  $5\frac{1}{2}$  years since I came to Shillong, and during that time much has happened. I see around me at this table not more than three or four faces who were assembled together on a similar occasion to bid farewell to my predecessor. The change of persons at an Indian hill station is always kaleidoscopic. But in the case of Shillong it is not only that the people of the station have come and gone, but the old Shillong has perished and a new Shillong has risen like a phoenix from its ruins. If the term of my administration in Assam is memorable for nothing else, it is at least worthy of mention that the great earthquake occurred during my consulship. There are some in this room who shared with us the terrors and anxieties of that fatal year. I have no wish to dwell upon them now, but this I will say, and all who were with us then will bear me emphatic witness, that I showed no tendency to exaggerate our difficulties or to report otherwise than with the utmost moderation the incidents of an almost indescribable calamity. Perhaps in the interests

of the Province I was not wise in the assumption of this studied moderation. I shall always be grateful to Lord Elgin for the personal sympathy he showed in no unstinted measure. But, speaking generally, we received little sympathy and scant credit, official or otherwise. Let that pass. No such thought then crossed our minds. The time was one that brought out the grit there is in a man, and I was, and ever shall be, proud of the courage, coolness, and resource displayed by all classes of the community, civil and military alike, at a moment when it was no disgrace to the strongest to turn pale or for the nerves of the boldest to be unstrung. The station of Shillong was levelled to the ground ; but with almost inconceivable rapidity it has been rebuilt, the lakes which were utterly destroyed have been repaired, and all Government buildings have been restored. This hospitable club in which we are now enjoying ourselves is an entirely new and improved structure. Look around you now, and you will see no traces of an earthquake. Our little station is renovated and more beautiful than ever, and long may it remain so ! It is with the great earthquake of 1897 that my administration of Assam will always be associated. We have undergone an experience which has been given to few. For not only did we sustain the stupendous seismic disturbance of the 12th of June, but we have felt more than two thousand minor subsequent shocks. We can afford to laugh at these now, and at last they are dying

out. But taken as a whole, the earthquake and its consequences are incidents of unsurpassed gravity and importance. We are never likely to forget them.

I think these remarks are appropriate on the present occasion when I am surrounded by my fellow-workers, to whom I owed so much at that time, and to whom I have ever since continued to be so deeply indebted. I am glad to be able to express in no faltering terms my acknowledgments to the officers of the Commission, to my subordinates generally, and especially to my Secretaries, for the help they have at all times most loyally and faithfully accorded to me. It has been my hard lot to administer punishment, censure and rebuke—for we are none of us infallible, and not even the youngest of us,—and I must have appeared to you far oftener than my inclination would suggest, as a regular Rhadamanthus bestowing punishment and blame when it would have been far pleasanter to have condoned delinquencies and held my peace. I know that there is nothing more trying to the temper of a Service than a sense, whether just or unjust, that its members have been harshly treated. But I am confident that no such feeling has ever at any time been entertained among my officers, and it is no idle glorying on my part when I affirm that they have trusted in me as I have trusted in them. The Administration suffered a severe loss by Mr. Gait's reversion to Bengal. He was the pride of the Province, and our loss has been Bengal's gain. But his place was

most efficiently filled by Mr. Monahan, a very able and sagacious Secretary, who has been my right-hand man, and to whom I am under innumerable obligations. No one can recognise more fully than I do the difficulties under which our District Officers are placed. Their position is often a most delicate one, involving, as it does, the exercise of unusual firmness and tact, lofty principle, steadfastness of purpose, and inflexible rectitude. I could not say that in all cases the high ideal demanded from them has been altogether attained. But I take this opportunity of declaring that I have nothing but admiration and gratitude for the spirit in which they have generally discharged their thankless and responsible duties. They are a fine and honourable body of men, of whom a Chief Commissioner may well be proud ; and they have nobly supported me, and co-operated with me during a period of trial, and often in very painful circumstances. Nor do I fail to recall the services they have rendered on our Frontier. Nowhere in India has better work been done than on the Frontier of Assam. I cannot recite without emotion the splendid roll of names—to speak of those only of my own time—who have plucked bright honour in the far-off hills, and have won renown in the subjugation and civilization of savage tribes :

*Excudent alii spirantia mollius æra  
Credo equidem, vivos ducent de marmore vultus;*

Orabunt causas melius, cœlique meatus  
 Describent radio, et surgentia sidera dicent ;  
 Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, momentol !  
 Hæ tibi erunt artes ; pacisque imponere morem,  
 Parcere subjectis et debellare suporbos.

First and foremost I place Robert Blair McCabe, the idol of his comrades, the most brilliant and greatest of our officers on the frontier, who perished alas ! in the earthquake. The names of others come quickly—Henry St. Patrick Maxwell, the sympathetic and worthy successor of Sir James Johnstone, in Manipur ; Alexander Portcous, who has so kindly proposed our healths to-night, and who will excuse me if I say to his face that he is not only a distinguished frontier officer, but one of the most conscientious and generous hearted of men ; Arthur William Davis and Albert Edward Woods, whose names are never likely to be forgotten in the Naga Hills ; my old and trusty friend John Shakespear, who with indomitable enthusiasm and patience has revolutionised Lushai land ; his colleague, Granville Loch, who has done such wonders in the same country ; William Magill Kennedy, now in charge of the Naga Hills ; Edward Baker, for many years the successful administrator of the Cachar Hills ; and last, Francis Jack Needham, of Sadiya, to whom I am knit with a bond of friendship for thirty-three years, and who rises to my mind as I speak as the very *beau-ideal* of a frontier officer and gallant gentleman.

And now I turn to other themes, *Incedo per ignes suppositos*. But I cannot pass over in silence the agitation of which I have been the central figure for the past eighteen months. It has been my misfortune—or is it my fault?—that not for the first time have I been perhaps the best abused man in India. I have lately been engaged on what Philip Francis called the 'dull work' of destroying old papers. But not wholly dull in my case, for it was curious to note how often, even a quarter of a century ago and from time to time since, I have been the victim of unqualified denunciation in the columns of the Press. Not for the first time have I stood forth as the champion of the oppressed. I have always been the protector of the weak against the strong, and in the discharge of this duty have trod on the corn of many powerful interests. I am old enough to remember how the most illustrious of Indian officials—Sir Fredrick Halliday and Sir John Peter Grant—were attacked with even greater virulence in their day for doing their duty. But time has triumphantly vindicated their reputation; and I can afford to appeal to the same tribunal. In truth, I am little concerned by the ink-slinging of which I have been the target. I am wanting in the feeling of resentment. I am not a good hater. That is a sign of weakness no doubt: a lack of spirit, I confess. But it so leaves me that I am not very sensibly affected by newspaper attacks. As the old Latin proverb says, there can be no

fight when the beating is all on one side. And yet I cannot help asking myself—What is the foundation of this recent agitation? Is it real and if real, what does it mean? Is it seriously supposed that I not a friend, the best of friends indeed, to the Tea industry? I claim to be judged by my actions, and I boldly aver that few men have done more for the industry in Assam than I have. As soon as I joined the Province, a time when the demand for land was pressing I threw open large tracts of country for occupation, and facilitated in every possible way the disposal of applications. The Inner Line was thrown back, and forest reserves were disforested. I revised the forest rules for the valuation of timber, which were represented to be a crushing burden, and by common consent removed all cause for complaint or discontent. I have done my utmost to extend and encourage the local manufacture of tea boxes. The Surma Valley Tea Association owes its existence to my initiative. I afforded every facility in my power to the planters of that Valley for the recovery of their coolies who were alleged to have absconded for work on the Railway—even, I am afraid, straining the law for this purpose. Although the resources of the Administration could ill afford it, I have spent the public funds liberally in the furtherance of tea interests. I have devoted my private funds to the same object. I have given every encouragement to planters to take up lands for ordinary cultivation in the neighbourhood of

their gardens, and have granted them leases on very favourable terms for the cultivation of new staples, such as sisal hemp, rhœa, and rubber. I have helped them in their endeavours to strike oil and coal and other minerals. I have granted them special leases for agricultural experiments. I have spared no pains to improve the condition of coolie transit from the recruiting districts to Assam, and may boast that I have improved them to the immense advantage of the industry. If I have spoken plainly to offending planters, my bark has has been worse than my bite; and I have been far more chary than any of my predecessors in resorting to the extreme measure of closing bad gardens to Act labour. I have devised an elaborate Colonisation scheme, of which one of the principal merits was the assistance it would have afforded to the Tea industry by the repopulation of the Province. And in season and out of season I have pressed on the Imperial Government the importance of improving local communications by means of tramways, which would, if my proposals had been carried out, have long ere this connected the principal gardens all over the Province with the railway and the river. All this is, I think, a tolerable record. And is it now to be blotted out, because I am alleged to have passed in my last Annual Report a general condemnation of the system of tea-garden management? I do not know where any such sweeping condemnation is to be found. I do know that I have avowed in that

report in the most explicit language that "in most of the tea gardens in Assam the coolies are well cared for and kindly treated." I know also that I publicly declared in Council, "that in the great majority of tea gardens in Assam the coolies are well cared for, and that the managers of gardens are ordinarily humane and kindly-hearted gentlemen." The managers are Englishmen ; and by this term be it understood that I include Irishmen and Scotchmen. They have the virtues of their race. But they are not exempt from the failings of a common humanity. They spring from the same class that I do myself, and as a body of men are representative of the community to which I belong. They are neither saints nor knaves. As was said of our friend Golyer's Ben :

‘ He wan’t the best man that ever you seen,  
And he wan’t so ungodly pizen mean,  
No better nor worse than the rest.’

They have their good side and their bad, and I had no wish to turn the light on to the latter. But again it was my misfortune—on this occasion it can hardly be said to have been my fault, for I was engaged in carrying out an investigation imposed upon me—to have had to conduct a searching enquiry into the sufficieney of the coolie's statutory wage, and I learned a great many things of which a Chief Commissioner may very easily remain, and often has remained, in ignorance. I was startled and distressed at the abuses—the tale of misery

and wrong—which came to my notice, and I felt it to be my duty not to conceal them. Unless the fullest publicity is given to the defects of an abnormal labour system, it is hopeless to look for their remedy. It was impossible for me to express the conviction which had resulted from this enquiry, that the gravest abuses on tea gardens were prevalent, without at the same time substantiating it by the production of evidence. I wrote my report. What I have written I have written ! I modify nothing. I withdraw nothing. I retract nothing. I regret that any section of the community should have set itself up in an attitude of defiance of the administration, because I ventured to expose in fearless terms that everything connected with the industry was not *couleur de the*. I regret the annoyance which was caused by the publication of this exposure ; but that annoyance, if it results in my being persistently described as a "malignant slanderer," may be regarded as a trifle, light as air, if it has been followed by the removal of the abuses referred to. I do not pretend to say that these abuses have been removed : they never will be altogether removed so long as human nature remains what it is. I have, indeed, left much undone. But I do claim that I have been instrumental in effecting a marked improvement, and I do not think that any of the benefits I have been able to confer on the industry can compare in importance with this. I am unfeignedly sorry that it will not now devolve on me to chronicle

this improvement in the management of Assam tea gardens, the amelioration in the condition of the coolies, the betterment of their health, and the rise in their wages, which has been a feature of the history of the past year. That pleasing duty I leave to the practised hands of my successor. But it is no small satisfaction to me on leaving the Province to feel that the industry has been warned in time, that it has taken the wise words of the Viceroy to heart and has set its house in order, and is co-operating with the efforts of the officials to raise the standard of comfort and happiness of the hundreds of thousands of poor and helpless creatures entrusted to its care. I have confidence in my fellow-countrymen. There are black sheep in every fold. But the great body of tea planters, I say again, are true to the core. There can be no mistake here. I regard them with the most kindly feelings, and shall always entertain of them most pleasant memories. They bade me a cordial welcome to the Province ; they have always been most hospitable to me during my tours—a hospitality I have been able but inadequately to requite—and I now bid them a cordial and regretful farewell. They are my friends, as I am theirs. They know that I have never wavered and never shall waver in my exertions on their behalf. They will not misinterpret my motives, or resent the remedy which I have applied with no unfriendly hand, to cure the canker which has been eating at the vitals of the

great industry they represent. They know that I have their interests at heart. They know, and I know that in the future, as in the past, whether on official or unofficial lines, whether in the old country or in this, we shall continue to work together, albeit it may be in different channels, aiming at one common end and goal,—the prosperity of Assam !

Ladies and Gentlemen,—I have detained you, I fear, longer than you had anticipated, and thank you for the indulgence with which you have listened to my remarks. Mrs. Cotton and I are very grateful to you for this entertainment, and for the warmth of the reception you have accorded to us. On her behalf, as well my own, I thank you and Mr. Porteous for the very kindly reference he made to her in the course of his speech. We have ample reasons for never forgetting Shillong. And assuredly we shall never be unmindful of the many acts of kindness we have always received from the residents of this sociable and charming station. If our sojourn here has not been altogether a fortunate one, at least we carry away with us fragrant memories of the overpowering fascination of the place and of the affection of our friends. We have passed many happy hours together. We have lived among you in weal and woe. And now we say adieu to you with a heavy heart, with thanks renewed, and with our most fervent wishes and prayers for your happiness, one and all.

SPEECH IN REPLY TO THE FAREWELL  
ADDRESS PRESENTED ON BEHALF  
OF THE PEOPLE OF ASSAM  
AT GAUHATI.

*May 1st, 1902.*

MAHARAJA BAHADUR, RAJAS, AND GENTLEMEN,

YOU have given me a reception on the occasion of my departure from you which must always be one of the memorable events of my life. I recall my arrival amongst you  $5\frac{1}{2}$  years ago and the welcome you then gave me. I recall the receptions I have met with from one end of this Province to another, and I find myself at a loss for words to express the feelings that well up in my breast. It would need a man cast in a sterner mould than I am and a heart more insensible to emotion than mine not to feel deeply and indelibly the kindness I have always experienced at the hands of the Assam people. You justly claim to represent all classes and communities of the people of Assam, and certain it is that everywhere, wherever and whenever I have been among you, not during this year only but always, men and women, the rich and poor, the old and young, have vied with one another just as you have done yesterday and to-day in the warmth of their greetings and now in the affectionate cordiality of their farewell.

The Assamese are an impulsive and grateful race, and I, for my part, may boast that I have not

been an irresponsible or unsympathetic ruler. You say in your address that I have been accessible to all. I remember exactly five years ago, when I was addressed by the then President of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, he was good enough to say that I was an eminently accessible official. I was pleased with the compliment at that time, and it comes with greater force now when it is paid to me by others than my own countrymen. Yet after all, it implies nothing more than that I have not failed in one of the most elementary of the duties which is imposed on every officer of Government. I have from the date I first joined as an Assistant Magistrate in Midnapur followed the good old rule I was taught by my forbears—*char darwaza khula*—and have always kept my doors open to all. I have not turned visitors away ; I have not kept them waiting unnecessarily ; I have listened to them with courtesy and kindness ; and if, as must be the case, I have been unable in the vast majority of personal applications to accede to them, I hope I have done something by a patient hearing and a friendly and straightforward refusal to alleviate disappointment. I have learnt much from these interviews which it was important for me to know, and of which I would otherwise have been ignorant. Sir George Campbell, my old master, once declared that he abhorred a *non possumus* reply : I now tell you that the excuse of *fursat nahin* is abhorrent to me. However busy I may have been, I have never wrapped myself up in the

excuse that I have no leisure to see anyone. The legacy of this example—far less common, I regret to say, than it used to be—I leave behind me. Accessibility may appear to be a small thing in itself. I have called it an elementary duty, and I deserve the lowest modicum of credit for it. But I can assure you—and, through you, proclaim to the great body of public servants to which I belong—that it is the secret and lies at the root of popular and successful administration in India.

The immense calamity of the earthquake befell the Province shortly after I took charge. You have referred to the services I then rendered. But they are as nothing in comparison with the co-operation and aid I received from my own officers and from every section of the public. Nothing could exceed the patience and resignation with which you bore this unprecedented trial and the sufferings which have followed it. Assam has passed through many vicissitudes during the period of my rule. You have suffered from pestilence in an extraordinary degree, and *kalá-ázár* has sapped the life blood of your race. The harvests have been indifferent; and though you have not been visited by famine, there has been considerable distress. Your crops are now liable to widespread injury from floods which are directly attributable to the earthquake. The damage from this cause has resulted in a great decrease of cultivation in what was once a most fertile country. The Assamese peasantry, who are pioneers of cultivation

in a remote and unhealthy tract encumbered with forest and morass and intersected by torrential streams, maintain a difficult struggle against the forces of nature. But lately removed from the fear of the incursion of savage neighbours, they are still exposed to danger from floods and fevers, earthquakes, and the attacks of wild animals. They have few incentives to exert themselves in the reclamation of the wastes by which they are surrounded. There is no wealthy class among you upon whom you can fall back for support and assistance in times of trouble. Although actual want is rare, there is a general absence of the minor luxuries and superfluities of life which accompany the advance of material civilisation. The conditions of the Assam Valley during my administration have been, on the whole, of a depressing character. But I think I can see before me the silver lining which brightens every cloud and the dawn of a coming era of progress and greater prosperity. *Kalá-ázár* has slowly died out, though it is lingering in particular localities. The past year was a healthy one. The past year's harvests were excellent, and the present year promises well. New river channels are scouring out in the place of those which were silted up by the earthquake. The Government of India have been able to assist the Administration in its financial troubles. Above all, it is, I hope, emphatically recognised by those who are placed in authority that the future welfare of the Valley

depends in no small measure on the careful and considerate treatment it may receive at the impending settlement. If there is to be any extension of cultivation ; if the Government rent-roll is to expand ; if immigration is to be encouraged there must be no hesitation in the adoption of a policy of extreme moderation and caution in the assessment of revenue. I am glad to believe that this keynote has not been struck in vain. I am delegating the administration to my successor under more favourable auspices than I myself enjoyed. His great abilities will find an ampler scope for their exercise than the somewhat limited field to which my opportunities have been restricted. He has the heartiest good wishes from me in his career ; and I venture to predict for Assam under his rule an epoch of recuperation and advancement.

The earthquake crippled the resources of my government. But I have done something for the good of the Province. You have called attention to some of the principal features of my administration. I point to none with more satisfaction than the improvements in Jail management. While the standard of discipline has been raised, the number of jail floggings has been reduced by three-quarters, and Assam is now brought on a line with other Provinces. I found that the average rate of mortality in jails was about 60 per thousand—a higher rate than in any other Province in India. I determined that this should cease, and spared no exertions to improve the sanitary conditions of

jail life. In 1900 the rate of mortality among convicts had fallen to 23·9, and in 1901 it was 25·2 per thousand. I could not have accomplished this without the cordial and humane co-operation of Jail Superintendents. I have placed Medical Officers in executive charge of every jail which contains more than 50 prisoners. I have re-organised the Civil Police Force on lines similar to those lately sanctioned in Bengal. I have boldly recommended the separation of Executive and Judicial functions among advanced populations, and I have urged the appointment of a Judge distinct from the Commissioner in the Assam Valley districts. I rejoice to hear in this connection your commendation of Mr. Porteous, than whom no more sympathetic, kind-hearted, and fair-minded officer ever served in Assam. I have succeeded in reconstituting the Commission on terms very favourable to its members ; and have reduced to the utmost the avoidable transfer of District Officers. The prospects of the numbers of the Provincial Service are, I hope, about to be materially bettered. After the most patient deliberation and consideration of public opinion, to which the fullest weight has always been attached, I have prepared a scheme for the reconstruction of Local Boards, and have reason to believe that the sanction of the Government of India to my proposals will not be long delayed. I have been most rigid in the application of the rules laid down by myself for the selection of candidates for the Subordinate and

Provincial Civil Service. In this distribution of patronage I have had to resist an unusual degree of pressure. I have, as you know, troops of friends in Bengal, where the best years of my life have been passed. But though I have received hundreds of applications, often very difficult to refuse, I have not conferred a single appointment on an applicant from Bengal. The interests of the Bengalis who are settled in Assam have by no means been neglected. But I have felt it my first duty to provide for natives of the Province.— Assam for the Assamese ! By this principle I have been guided. But even with this established rule, it has not been easy to decide between the conflicting claims of Muhammadans and Hindus, and of natives of the Assam Valley and natives of Sylhet. To the best of my ability, I have striven to be impartial ; and the opinion of the Province will, I believe, confirm your favourable verdict. My object has been to raise the standard of higher education ; and I have been inflexible in my decision to give posts to none but those who possess high educational qualifications. I have tried to improve the tone and character of the Service ; and in this, too, I am glad to hear you say I have succeeded. It was a great pleasure to me to be able to obtain for a distinguished Assamese gentleman, Mr. Abdul Majid—an officer who is as amiable as he is talented—an appointment which in due course will lead to high preferment in the ranks of the Commission. To the

encouragement of education I have indeed devoted the best of my energies. I regard it as a great honour that my name should be associated with this College where we are met to-day. It has made a good start; and long may it flourish! I am proud to be indentified with its institution, and shall always welcome news of its welfare and prosperity. I desire to commemorate the obligations which the Surma Valley is under to my friend, the philanthropic Raja Girish Chunder Roy, for his generous support to higher education in Sylhet. I highly commend also the liberality of the Zamindars of the Goalpara district in this direction. In the Department of Education at least the Province in my time has made a great advance. The Berry-White Medical School at Dibrugarh, which owed its initiative to the benefaction of an English gentleman, has been organised on a most efficient scale, and will prove a great boon to Assam, and especially to the Tea industry. I have suggested the establishment of a Technical or Industrial School in this Valley on the best and most approved lines, which should be called after the name of the late Mr. Williamson, a benevolent tea planter, whose endowment for furthering practical education in Assam has never been properly utilised. As the late Dr. Berry-White's bequest has been taken full advantage of, so the Williamson bequest should form the nucleus of a first rate technical school, which the Government would maintain. The recent bestowal by the

Government of India of a special grant for Education has enabled me to propose this scheme and many others for the furtherance of education in Assam. I have put forward special proposals for the development of Female Education and for Boarding accommodation in connection with schools —a measure to which I attach great importance. I have encouraged Ethnographic research; and welcome the reference you have made in your address to the names of Mr. Gait and Major Gurdon, who have justly earned a reputation for Assamese scholarship. In the Forest Department I have inaugurated great improvements which have materially benefited the people, and especially the Tea industry. I have elaborated a scheme for gradually colonising the Province and bringing vast tracts of culturable waste under cultivation. Although my proposals did not receive the favourable consideration I had hoped for they still hold the field and are, I venture to think, among the most valuable of the contributions I have rendered to the Province. I am thankful to say that my recommendations regarding the leasing of town lands and subletting, to which you so prominently refer, were accepted by the Government of India. I have energetically combated the the ravage of *kala-azar*, and have remedied, as far as possible, a standing grievance from all parts of the Province known as *begar*, or forced labour. I have improved communications generally; and have urged that every encouragement and support

should be given not only to the Railway system, from which we expect so much, but also to the River Steam Companies who have done so much for us. There can be no difference of opinion as to the necessity for connecting Gauhati with the Bengal Railway System. But for the rest I do not think that any further extension of Railways in Assam is required. I say now, as I said five years ago, that what is needed for the development of the almost inexhaustible resources of the Province is a well devised system of Tramways, which would constitute feeders to the main line of railway and to the river bank. I consider that Tramways are peculiarly suitable for a Province like Assam, where the rainfall is exceptionally heavy, and where metalled roads cannot be maintained on account of the enormous cost of metalling them. No earthen road is capable of standing regular wheeled traffic when the rainfall is as heavy as it is in Assam ; and the only way in which communication by land can be kept permanently open in a satisfactory form is by the construction of Tramways. I had hoped to have seen these Tramways stretching from either side of the main line of river and railway both in the Assam and Surma Valleys. That hope has not been realised ; but I do not despair of its fulfilment. I do not now refer to the problems of Frontier administration which are always of absorbing interest to the Head of this Province. I have spoken in Shillong of the services of our Frontier

officers. I have spoken there also of the benefits I have conferred on the Tea industry, of the improvements I have effected in the conditions of coolie transit from the recruiting districts, and of protection I have afforded to the coolies employed on tea gardens. It is no small consolation to me to know that my humane policy has met with your unqualified approval. I could not have carried it out but for the support of Indian public opinion and the loyal and fearless co-operation which the Civil and Medical Officers of the Province have accorded to my efforts.

I am glad that this address should have been read to-day on your behalf by Mr. Jagunath Boruah, Rai Bahadur, an enlightened and representative Assamese gentleman, who is also interested in tea, and whom I look forward to shortly meeting again in England as the representative of the Province on the occasion of His Most Gracious Majesty's Coronation. I rejoice especially to welcome my old friend the Maharaja Bahadur of Durbhanga in your midst. His interest in Assam is known to you all ; his liberality and benefaction to a grateful few. But to me the presence of the Maharaja is a peculiar pleasure ; for I have known him and his lamented brother, whose loss I cease not to deplore, from their boyhood. They have always trusted in me, and I have watched their distinguished careers with an almost paternal care. His presence recalls the happy days of my service in Bengal and the many friends I have in Calcutta

and in all districts of that Province, and I heard him in the remarks he has addressed to you to-day, all too kindly uttered but dictated from his affection to me, with deep emotion.

And now I must bid you farewell. It is not a final farewell, I trust. For how is it possible for a man who has devoted his life to India not to look forward to revisiting the country to which he owes so much. I leave India with the profoundest regret—not for the loss of position and emolument which retirement from the service involves : but regret that my Indian career is closed at a time when my powers are unimpaired and I am conscious of having done so little, while there remains so much to do ; regret for unused opportunities for benefiting my fellowmen. I am knit to this country by an hereditary link extending over five generations, by a personal service of 35 years, and by affectionate sentiments to the people, which are reciprocated by them. I have held high office among you ; and as I have earned your confidence, esteem and regard, I deem this my reward. In my retirement I can never forget India ; and I shall never forget Assam. All the energies of which I am still possessed will continue to be devoted to the service of this great country. I shall always owe to India more than I can repay. I can never discharge all my obligations to her people. I have never ignored and shall never be unmindful of the responsibilities I owe to the Government. I have never failed in my sense of discipline. I

am true to my salt. But in my retirement or in harness the interests of India will always be nearest to my heart. I bid you again farewell, I am deeply grateful for all the kindness you have shown to me ; and I part from you with sincere sorrow.

## SPEECH IN REPLY TO THE FAREWELL ADDRESS

PRESENTED ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF  
BENGAL AT THE TOWN HALL, CALCUTTA.

*6th May 1902.*

MAHARAJA BAIJADUR, RAJAS AND GENTLEMEN—I know not how to utter thoughts which arise in my breast as I listen to the all too complimentary sentiments expressed in your address and gaze upon this vast and appreciative audience. I cannot and will not attempt to make any adequate reply. Bengal was my home for twenty-nine long and happy years before I went to Assam. It is nearly thirty-five years since I first set foot in this city, a young man full of vigour and enthusiasm and aspirations, with a set determination to consecrate my life not only to the devoted and loyal service of the Government, under which I am proud to have been able to rise to honourable and responsible office, but also directly to the service of the people. I think I may claim to have followed a consistent policy, and though I do not say that there have not been lapses from the high standard I placed before myself, I have never forgotten to aim at its realization, always remembering that, as I have received freely, I must freely give and that the debt I owe to India is one I can never repay. I have tried to place the interests

of the people before my own. *Fais ce que dois advienne que pourra.* By this old knightly motto I have striven to be guided. I believe in the truth of the teaching—discredited though it appears to be—that the great problem of modern political life is the subordination of politics to morals. I believe that devotion of the strong to the weak is a primary duty of those in power. I am not and never have been a very radical reformer. I entertain too high a regard and admiration for the illustrious memories of the mighty dead, whose influence has moulded the present and will direct the future. I know, that, if you are to destroy, you must replace, and I have never advocated any of the revolutionary and destructive suggestions for the reorganisation of Hindu society which from time to time I have seen in ascendance and which have already done so much harm. I believe in the religious as well as in the aristocratic basis of that society. It is true that the old order is changing, giving place to the new, but it devolves on the natural leaders of the Indian people to guide and control the period of transition, so that it may be traversed without disturbance. I have refrained from interference in such matters. But I have put myself forward in an humble way as the minister and interpreter of Government to the people, and in my official capacity have always borne in mind that by the force of personal example and good-will it would be possible for me in the positions I have held to do much to knit together the links which unite the

and characteristic docility and want of firmness demand the guidance and protection of more powerful superiors. The basis of internal order in this country is to be found in a patrician aristocracy of indigenous growth and trained by past associations to control and lead. I congratulate you in Bengal on the possession of a permanent settlement, the Magna Charta of the Province. Especially glad am I to have received this address to-day from the hands of my venerated friend Maharaja Bahadur Sir Jotendro Mohun Tagore, the leader of the Hindu community in Calcutta, whose tried and distinguished fidelity to the British Government is only equalled by his devotion to the interests of the public. When I regard his benevolent countenance, what a crowd of associations surge up in my memory ! When I gaze upon this sea of friendly faces I can no longer command my utterance. I can only bid you farewell : not a final farewell, I trust, for I shall assuredly, if life and health are spared me, come among you again ; but a sincere farewell with the amplest gratitude for all you have done for me and the renewed assurance, although none is needed, that my remaining energies shall continue to be consecrated to the service of the Indian people.











